

PUNCH OR THE LONDON CHARTER—WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18 1950

6d

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PUNCH

JANUARY

18
1950

Vol. CCXVIII
No. 5695

PUNCH OFFICE
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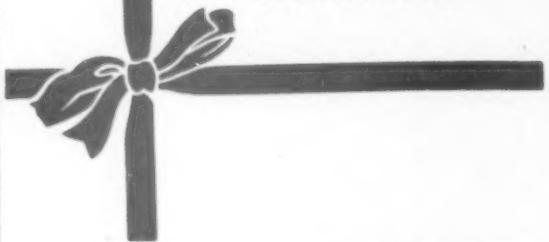
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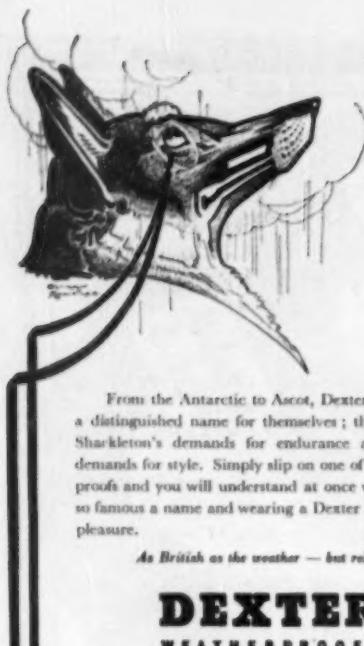
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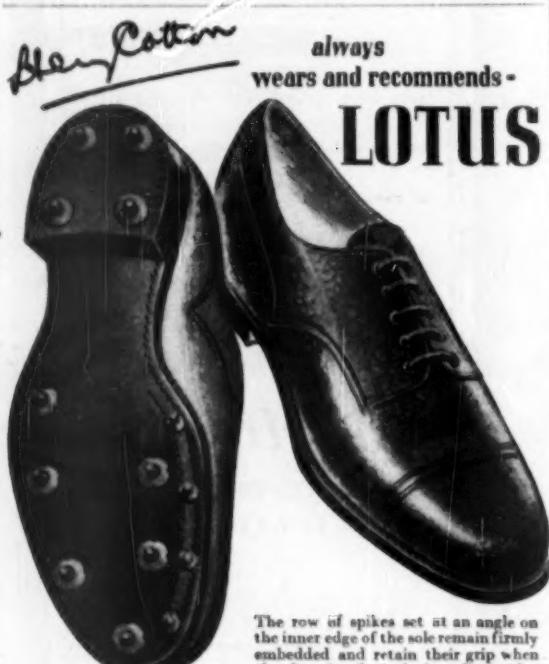
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concentrated for economy —
a touch is all you need to groom
your hair for the day.





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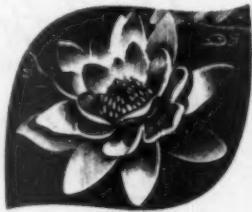
HERE is a simple
cocktail recipe which
will suit all occasions
and please every taste:

THE MYERS COCKTAIL

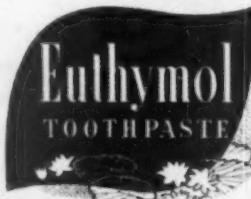
3 parts 'Myers'
1 part Orange Squash
1 part Lime Cordial
Shake well with ice
Serves at once

THE DARK & MELLOW RUM

MATURED & BOTTLED IN JAMAICA



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Morning
Freshness



Your
car is not safe
unless it is frost-proofed with

SMITHS
BLUECOL

the SAFE
anti-freeze

A box of Bluecol Anti-Freeze for Radiators and a can of the same product are shown.

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**"Glad you like this sherry
— it's South African"**

It's extremely good. I got some South African wine the other day . . .

I know. A good wine, but not of this quality.

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Well, this is a truly representative South African wine. You see, though the Cape has been for centuries one of the world's finest wine countries, it couldn't compete in Britain with European countries until Empire wines got a duty preference twenty years ago. That bucked up the South African industry.

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has made Ovaltine
the World's
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THE world-wide success of 'Ovaltine' is due to the following facts:—

- ★ 'Ovaltine' provides special health-giving nourishment of the highest quality at the lowest possible price.
- ★ All the benefits of production on a large scale have been passed on to the public in the present low prices.
- ★ Considering its exceptional quality, 'Ovaltine' is the most economical food beverage you can buy.

'Ovaltine' is prepared from Nature's best foods, and products of the famous 'Ovaltine' Farms set the highest standards for the malt, milk and eggs used. Eggs are very important because they provide valuable food elements which help to make 'Ovaltine' outstanding in its all-round nutritive qualities.

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By Appointment Ovaltine
Manufacturers to H.M. The King

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AABACAS ENGINEERING CO. LTD.
Birkenhead, England



Men who smoke Murray's Mellow Mixture wouldn't give it up for love or money. It's a grand tobacco of medium strength—the strength most men prefer. It's cool and fragrant, with a flavour all its own. Burns slowly and evenly, and therefore lasts longer. That is important these days!

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4/11d. an ounce

MURRAY, SONS AND CO. LTD., BELFAST,
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have been skilfully blended for over 130 years



Established 1825

Assets £60,000,000



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against the catastrophe of the
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a Standard

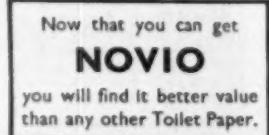
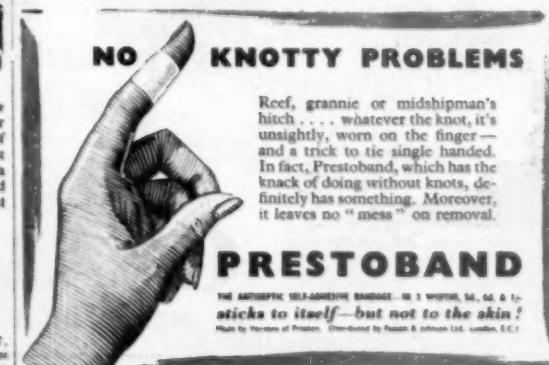
Family Income Policy

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The
Standard Life
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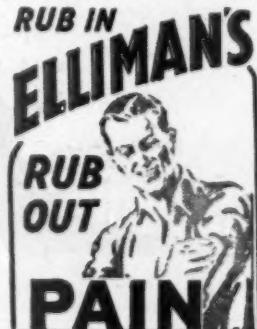
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Enjoying universal favour for a hundred years. Elliman's continues to grow in popularity, and is undoubtedly the World's best known Embrocation. It has been used and trusted by generations of sufferers from RHEUMATISM, LUMBAGO, SCIATICA, STIFFNESS





January calls for PIMM'S No.1

Because Janus was a two-headed god, his name was given to this month, when one looks back wistfully at the year that's gone, and forward hopefully to the Pimm's to come. (What a lucky god that fellow is, to be able to enjoy two Pimm's at once!)

We make Pimm's from pure London Gin and continental liqueurs. You add lemonade, ice and borage—the cordial herb that makes Pimm's even more scintillating.



THE MOST HEAVENLY DRINK ON EARTH

David Cope's Gallery
OF FAMOUS 'CHASES

POETHLYN
(1910)
b. g. by
Rydal Head—
Fine Champagne

POETHLYN had the distinction of winning the Grand National twice, the second time carrying 12st. to equal the performance of Manifesto. Poethlyn's two races were the 1918 War National at Gatwick and the Aintree Grand National in 1919. Poethlyn won all his nine races in these two years, including two Lancashire 'Chases at Manchester. He was ridden by E. Pigott (Grand National 1912, 1918, 1919) in most of his successful races.

The continuing tradition of the British Turf has its counterpart in the unknown service which has been offered to sportsmen by David Cope Ltd., for more than half a century. Our free, illustrated brochure describes this service.

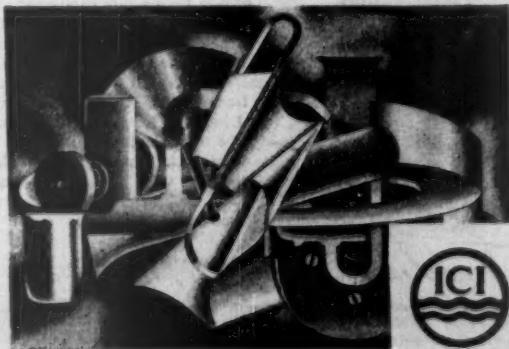
DAVID COPE LTD., LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON, E.C.4
"The World's Best Known Turf Accountants"



Achievements of an Industry

Genius for invention is inherent in the British people. In a previous series of announcements—"Ancestors of an Industry"—I.C.I. told the story of Britain's scientific pioneers from A.D. 1144. The present series is designed to describe some recent British chemical achievements, many of which have been the genesis of new products and processes which have given fresh vigour to the nation's industry.

Such achievements have been sometimes the brilliant discoveries of inspired individuals, but are more often the work of teams of research chemists co-operating on a given task and working to a set plan. The announcements in this series are proof—if proof were needed—that the British spirit of initiative and enterprise is still alive.



By Appointment
MOTOR MOWER
MANUFACTURERS
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ATCO SERVICE

New Boys and Old Boys

Large numbers of garden lovers will soon be enjoying the ease and precision of ATCO lawn mowing for the first time. As any veteran ATCO owner can tell them they have another pleasant experience before them — the smoothly efficient willing Service that will nurse their machine throughout its life. As all "old boys" know, now is the time for ATCO Service to come to the aid of all good ATcos. Will owners please contact their nearest ATCO Depot?

ATCO MOTOR MOWERS • ATCOSCYTHES
ATCO BOATIMPELLERS
ATCO ACCESSORIES • ATCO SERVICE
CHARLES H. PUGH LTD.
Whitworth Works, Birmingham, 9



*The
Gateway
to
Winter Sports*

WHEN you turn your back on winter gloom with the expectation of clear, sparkling air and the Alpine snows ahead... go by British Railways. The 9 o'clock service from Victoria allows time for a meal in Paris before joining the night train for the French or Italian Alps, which you reach next morning. For the Swiss winter sport centres there are through Sleeping Car trains from Calais, the service leaving London at 1.0 p.m., arriving beside the snow slopes next day. On the way back celebrate a marvellous holiday with a break in Paris. The Golden Arrow leaves for London at 12.20 p.m.

Travel LONDON-CONTINENT by

For tickets, reservations, etc., apply Continental
Agency Office, VICTORIA STATION, London,
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in BOVRIL

Hot Bovril! It's like a huge delighted grin spreading all over you. It's like the very essence of beefy cheerfulness flooding your veins. Bovril's beefiness gives you such a glow of well-being that the battered old world seems a warmer and friendlier place.

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Gordon's

ORANGE GIN • LEMON GIN

delicious!

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Gin Distillers
to H.M. King George VI*



32/- 16/-
PER HALF
BOTTLE BOTTLE
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The Perfect Pair



CHARIVARIA

A householder was recently charged with robbing his gas-meter. His offer to make up the loss with some of his Government stock was coldly ignored.

What to Do with Your Old Octopus
"EXPERIENCED WATERPROOF GARMENT MAKER WANTED WITH 4 TO 6 HANDS." Manchester, "Evening Chronicle"

The nesting habits of the African palm-swift have recently come under investigation. This bird builds its nest with the entrance at the bottom. Consequently its eggs have to be glued to the sides with a sticky secretion, and the mother then sits on them by holding firmly on to the walls of the nest with her toes. This explains why cuckoos migrate

Snow Plough Ahead

"Towards the end of their fortnight's stay in Switzerland these young ski-ing enthusiasts will sit for an examination to test their skill." *"Daily Telegraph"*



Communism, a Liverpool speaker told his audience, is essentially sound. And, of course, fury.

A correspondent in a weekly paper says the worst ten minutes he ever had was trying to fasten the back of a Victorian dress his wife wore to a ball. There must have been a catch somewhere.

Married women, a judge declared recently, should realize that it does not pay to keep a diary. Mrs. Dale is reported to be unmoved.

We feel deeply for Joseph Morebay of Badili, Papua, who wrote to the officer in charge of native labour at Port Moresby as follows:

"DEAR SIR.—Herewith an information correlative to the nature of my feelings.

The office which I am located too, composes a very unfortunate life. The office is not too delicious and the work is not delightful.

Please I wish to advise, 'Is there any available office where I could be forced into ?'

There may be. But please we wish to advise that Papua is not the only place where people have to do work that is not delightful in an office not too delicious.

To emphasize the gravity of the present situation the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* is reported to have changed its front-page drawing so that the clock-hands point to "three minutes to zero hour," instead of eight minutes to as formerly. We shall be interested to see what happens when Summer Time comes in.

RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT

WE either have or have not arrived at the middle of the century, according to which newspaper one reads. As a member of the conservative school that frowns on the applauding of a century when but ninety-nine completed runs have appeared on the score-board I hold that we have not. However, I am prepared to accord a just respect to those who think otherwise. The point I wish to make is that even a Semicentennial Souvenir Number is apparently a matter of relativity and that this lends a certain added significance to the latest Einstein pronouncement.

My readers will have had ample time by now to study and appraise the Master's Generalized Gravitational Theory and to realize, at any rate in a generalized way, its implications for themselves. I therefore feel it unnecessary to discuss the theory in any very great detail. If I understand the thing correctly—a laughable improbability—it all boils down to a matter of four very simple equations, the right-hand side of each being nought. This might seem to imply a defeatist, even nihilist, conclusion. Not so. The professor has not spent thirty years alone with a roll of newsprint and a pencil-sharpener in a single-minded effort to prove that he was wasting his time. What he has discovered is a law that will account not for nothing but for everything. (If it turns out to be a good law, that is.)

When I was at school I was taught, as were others, that parallel straight lines, however far you produce them in either direction, will never meet. It is a good many years now since Professor Einstein demonstrated that this is not so, but the canard still persists. The fact is that parallel lines will not meet if produced as far as Asia Minor—or it may be a little farther: I speak without the book—but that in outer space they not only meet; they cross-garter themselves and come back to Paddington or wherever it was they started from. Terrestrial mathematics—let's face it—are absolutely no use in dealing with the infinitely large.

At the other end of the scale (if you can imagine an infinite scale with two ends) it seems that an atom consists of a number of electrons whizzing in orbits about a nucleus. Sometimes, as a result of heat—or as a cause of heat: I am not clear on this—an electron will shift from one orbit into another not merely swiftly, or even suddenly, but *instantaneously*. In fact an electron can be in two places at once, and is, and it is not a bit of use for disciples of Sir Boyle Roche to try to prove that it must therefore be a bird of the air. The fact is that stop-watches are worthless and all the algebra in the world breaks down when it comes to dealing with the infinitely small. I believe that even Einstein's Relativity Theory

boggles at this, but it seems that only five men in England understand that, of whom I do not claim to be one.

Apparently the new theory accounts for all these things, the infinitely large, the large, the sizable and the infinitely small. For everything, in fact. But they say it will be another fifty years before it is proved either right or wrong, and I find this disappointing. I do not feel that I can conveniently wait so long for the explanation of a workaday puzzle that may or may not be understood by even as many as five. I refer to the famous Unfillability Paradox of Holes in the Ground, and will give an example of what I mean.

Recently I had occasion to sink a fence-post in the ground. I dug a hole in the hard earth. I inserted one end of the post, producing the other end through the vertical in the direction of outer space. I then replaced the earth, or spoil, tamping it down firmly at intervals. You know what happened, I am sure. There was not enough earth to fill the hole. THERE NEVER IS. Dig a hole and you never have enough earth, packed tight, to fill it up again, even with a four-by-four fence-post to eke it out. If anyone doubts my words he is welcome to come down here and dig in my hole. I will wager a galaxy to a neutron that he will find it less tightly packed and easier to dig, yet lower, than the surrounding ground.

I incline respectfully to the view, therefore, that the Einstein approach may be just the thing for mathematical persons, heating engineers, cosmologists and such, but that for the ordinary chap what is wanted is a simple equation or two that will cover, in a generalized way, such baffling phenomena as centuries and holes in the ground.

6 6

"The Canadian Tourist Association was told to-day that current coal and steel strikes in the United States may wreck the Dominion's 1950 hours program."—Canadian paper.

And then how can they amuse the tourists?



"I only asked it to work out its own P.A.Y.E."



THE VOTER IN WONDERLAND

I. OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

PENUMBRA

AN angel stooped but yesterday:
Ere I had time to shield my sight
The shadow of his wing fell grey
Between all colour
And the light.

In the penumbra
Of his wing
A pearly gum my gaze doth clog.
Vague shapes to which dim meanings
cling
Move in a glow-illumined fog.

I wove from Beauty's sudden gleams
A stuff more rare than cloth of gold;
The changing pattern of my dreams
Which should endure when I grew old.

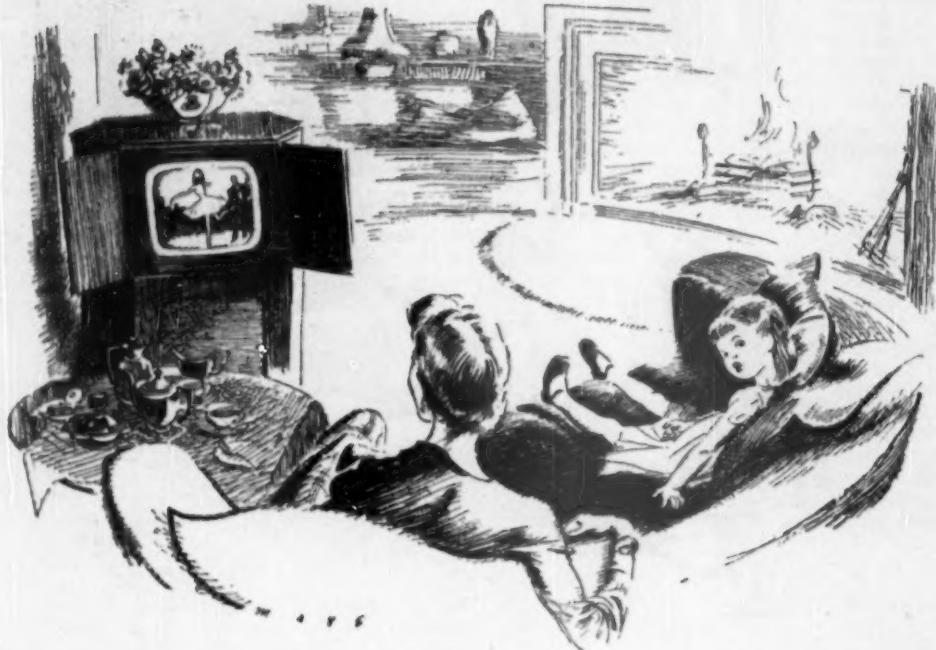
Said I at first:
"My inward eye

Shall blaze with such an angry flame
That, burning through the day's black sky,
I will search out that angel's name.

I will appeal
Against the shade
Of darkness:
Lord, it is not just."
The Angel's voice this answer made,
"Be silent,
Noisy grain of dust,

For that which is
From that which seems
The Shade
Canst tell by mortal sight?
Is not thy shining cloth of dreams
More splendid still against the night?
The shadow of my wing may lift—
And dazzle thee with too much light!"

R. C. SCRIVEN



"What was wireless, Mummy?"

"EVERY new decade may be said to have its teething troubles," reflected Mr. ppending, at his desk in Whitehall. He rang the bell for N. Broom, his assistant.

"I have read your report about our forms, Broom," he said. "You think they should all be subjected to a slight revision, which you specify, and that they should be re-issued, existing stocks being destroyed."

"That is so, Mr. ppending," said Broom. "I think it important that the public should not have to make avoidable deletions when completing forms for which as tax-payers they pay. They are petty deletions but there are many of them. From Long Tom, the double-foolscap buff job for completion by those desirous of planting sycamore trees in tubs on rafts the property of the Tadpole Conservancy and Water Lily Amenity Commission, to Little Flimsy, the stamp-sized Brick Dust Allocation Chit, this department is responsible for no fewer than four thousand seven hundred and sixty-three different kinds of form."

"All the same, Broom, I think that you lay too little emphasis upon the waste which must inevitably follow upon the approval of your proposal. We have two and a quarter million unused forms. To condemn this vast stock of soundly-designed formage would be dangerously uneconomical."

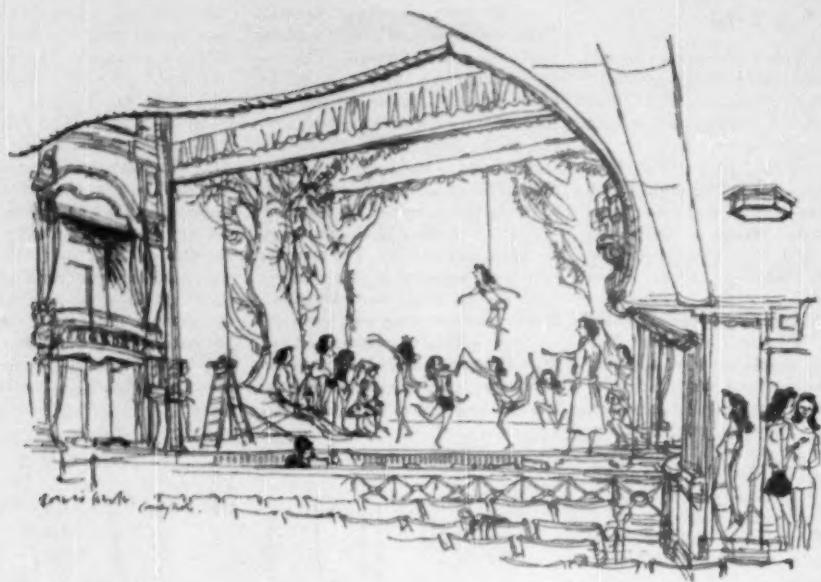
Broom having bowed and left the room, ppending sent for the 1939, the 1929, the 1919 and the 1909 files on the subject, hesitating for a moment before deciding that the 1899 file was not entirely a relevant precedent. He then wrote a note to the Under Secretary, suggesting the issue of a memorandum warning all departments of the existence of the problem, but offering no specific guidance. This, as the files showed, was what had been done early in 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940.

The Under Secretary's name was O. U. P. Greats. He dictated a letter into a small machine supplied for the purpose to Under-Secretaries and their peers.

"My dear ppending," he said, "two small p's and you'll find his initials in your little book. There is as you say an urgent need for economy and I must agree with you that Broom's laudable desire to save the public from having to delete a digit some two and a quarter million times during the early years of the forthcoming decade would be unlikely to receive the approval of our lords and masters. Pop commas into that sentence if you think it needs easing. I do. New paragraph. With regard to your own proposal my view is that the memoranda of 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940 closed the stable-door after the horses of those decades had gone; and that the

memorandum which you now propose would again but close the door of an empty stable. New paragraph. We might however look just a little silly if we let it happen again. I suggest we meet for lunch early in 1937 and put our heads together. By allowing ourselves three years it should be possible to revise forms unsuitable for the 'sixties of this century without wasting stocks suitable only for the 'fifties. Then would be the time for a memorandum. It might say that when indicating on our forms the space for the date, '19' should be printed, not '195.' Please make a note about that lunch in the long-term diary."





FULLY LICENSED ELVES

WHEN a pixie slides down a moonbeam and, alighting briskly on a stage toadstool, begins to unpack her spells I dare say it has never occurred to you to wonder if her licence is in order, as you might if she were a taxicab or a wire-haired terrier. "Licensed to ply as a hohgoblin!" I can hear you shout angrily. "Don't be absurd!" I admit it sounds just the kind of human tactlessness calculated to frighten all the little people out of every magic ring in Shaftesbury Avenue, and I heard of it myself with horror. Yet it's true. Not a single sprite trips our stage (unless she is fifteen or over, in which case she is getting a trifle elderly for the job) who hasn't a licence in her pocket, signed by a nice avuncular gentleman, and made out, with a great many "ifs" and "mustn'ts," for a brief three months.

When I began to look into the private life of the panto child, about which I knew as little as I expect you do, this was my first surprise. I discovered that cotton-mills and coal-mines were not the only places where high-thinking Victorians were

careless about children. The theatre gave a grand chance for exploitation. A manager would come to Mrs. Silly, who might be poor or ambitious or merely tired of being a mother, and say: "Look here, that little Freddy of yours. There's big money in the lad. Let me take him on tour for a year and we'll see how he shapes"; and off would go Freddy, who was six perhaps, to trail up and down the dingier parts of England at everybody's beck and call, bolting indigestible meals, sleeping with ten

others in a stuffy attic, and being stood double gins by the leading lady on Saturday nights. In the end Parliament got round to all this, and in 1889 the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act contained the revolutionary provision that no child should appear on the stage until it was seven. One can imagine the growls of "Pampering!" that must have rumbled through Clubland. But people who knew continued to agitate, until in 1933 the Children's and Young Persons' Act settled the rules now applied by each local authority. These are severe, and very rightly so. To appear on the stage a child must be twelve, and until it is fifteen (the school-leaving age) must have four hours of ordinary lessons every day during the school terms. A medical board and a school report precede the issue of a licence. Touring is strictly limited, and pains have been taken to ensure supervision, good food, exercise and, indeed, everything that could possibly occur to the most conscientious parent. Even hot milk in the



evening, when on tour, is officially recommended by the L.C.C., which takes care of London children. Can an elf have its licence endorsed, some may ask? Last year the L.C.C. swooped on a child that had slipped its leash and gone home unescorted.

A fantastic anomaly, however, leaves film children uncontrolled. The only law applying to them is the industrial code that restricts the activities of paper-boys, and since few children are concerned, and the maximum fine is about the cost of a director's lunch, authority winks at them unwillingly. But it may not wink much longer, as a Home Office committee is now in action.

Not only are elves licensed, but also the official matrons who look after them in the ratio of one to ten. At the Cambridge Theatre, in a dressing-room where four charming little girls were making up for *Christmas Party*, I ran one of these courageous ladies to earth, and found she was the children's authoress, Miss Joan Selby-Lowndes. It was plain to see that her relations with her charges were those of the nicest sort of favourite aunt. The dressing-room laughed heartily to hear of Mr. Punch's interest. Miss Selby-Lowndes told me she was responsible for her ten children all the time they were at the theatre.

"Their day! Well, during the Christmas run they do nine shows a week. On two-show days they arrive an hour before curtain-time, with suitcases bulging with sandwiches, make-up, spare clothes and sweets. They spend the hour gossiping, losing their dresses, eating tangerines, throwing cotton swabs at each other, and getting ready. While they're on the stage I'm in the wings. As soon as the first show is over

there's a mad scramble—children aren't allowed in the streets in make-up—and we all dash out to lunch some way away for the sake of fresh air. Then back to the theatre again, very short of time. After the second show they have to be cleaned up and properly dressed, and met at the stage door by some accredited adult. *Do they enjoy it? Look at them!*"

There wasn't a shadow of doubt. . . .

On the stage at the Comedy Mr. Punch's Artist and I watched a rehearsal of *Where the Rainbow Ends*. Everything was very friendly, but the children's keenness showed in their eyes. In a corner the lion was practising enormous growls, but broke off hospitably to show me the spring in his mouth, of which he seemed justly proud. "I suppose you find all this rather fun?" I asked a fairy balancing on two toes. It was a frightfully silly question.

"Do gnomes get chilblains?"

I inquired of Miss Ruby Hilary, looking at their bare feet. Apparently never. Miss Hilary is a director of the Italia Conti School, one of the leading ones to train stage children, and she told me how she herself had saved enough between the ages of ten and fourteen to see her through the rest of her training. This is an interesting point. At least one third of each child's salary

is compulsorily banked. . . .

Having thus been made generously free of fairyland to-day, I wanted to hear about the past. Miss Phyllis Dare, who made her first appearance in "The Babes" when she was only nine, very graphically described the terrible silence with which she was met when she returned to school. Even the



mistress treated her with awe, and most of her lessons passed pleasantly in signing autographs. Her mother generally went with her to the theatre, a stern critic in the wings. During long runs a governess took over, and showed her London between performances. She said she loved every minute of her early adventures.

And so did Miss Nova Pilbeam, the first young actress (she was just sixteen) to play *Peter Pan*. When I asked her how she began she told me that one night, during the run of A.P.H.'s *Tantivy Towers*, Nigel Playfair, short of a child, said to her father, who was his manager, "You've got a daughter. Can she speak?" At the time she was only eleven, but she dodged the licence by not being paid, Playfair giving her instead the make-up box she still uses. She claimed that a child gets sharper pleasure from acting than a grown-up, because it can lose itself utterly, undisturbed by professional worries. Before she could fly in *Peter Pan* she had to do circuits and bumps like any other young pilot. But even when you get your wings accidents happen. On one occasion—she shuddered to remember it—he failed to make the Darlings' mantelpiece. . . .

Are stage children precocious? Perhaps a little. But their manners are beautiful and their poise is genuine and unaffected. As for education, well, life is education, and of that they get a fine fat slice.

ERIC KROWS



AT THE PICTURES

Task Force—*Gigi*

THE effectiveness of *Task Force* (Director: DELMER DAVES) is terrific. There has seldom been anything to touch the excitement and the wild visual splendour of some of the grand-scale air-sea battle scenes. These, or something very like them, have been seen before, in such wartime documentaries as *The Fighting Lady*; they are authentic colour photographs taken in action, and it says much for the skill and care of the director that their unparalleled magnificence makes a true climax

person (I mean we are actually there on the fatal day; many films have given us the effect of the radio reports as they came in to places on the mainland, but the impact of the occasion is powerfully increased here), and we are back in the atmosphere of a war film. It is all spectacularly well done, and the studio sequences linking the authentic battle pictures are dovetailed in smoothly. No one can help finding these authentic scenes the most impressive and memorable part of the film, but as a whole it is a most creditable example of the sort of thing Hollywood does best.

I have already observed that *Gigi* (Director: JACQUELINE AUDRY) is a trivial piece as French films go; it is, in fact, an empty little story by COLETTE about an innocent young girl's social education at the hands of two elderly and cynical women relatives in the Paris of 1900. It is not at all elevating, though a radiant ending contrives that all shall be well for innocence, and the dialogue (I won't pretend to have grasped all of it) has been pertinaciously spiced with "naughty" remarks; but it is full of period curiosities and quite amusing in its mannered way, and in the part of the fifteen-year-old heroine appears a charming newcomer, DANIELLE

DELORME. All round her are experienced players—GADY MORLAY as the more worldly of the two old ladies, JEAN TISSIER as every comedian's dream of an elderly Paris roué—and she certainly doesn't get much help from the general tone of the picture, which has no delicacy of touch whatever. In spite of this she succeeds in making the right sort of impression.

The detail here is not so satisfying as is usual in French films, because too often the aim is not so much to convince and please by verisimilitude as to amuse by the quaintness of fifty years ago. Nor are the subsidiary characters, or any of the characters, given any depth; they are essentially types, presented simply for the sake of the comic incidents in which they are involved and the smart things they say. The film is in fact a trifle, but an entertaining one.

* * * * *

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Bicycle Thieves (11/1/50) remains the best film for miles around; and *The Third Man* (14/9/49) is still to be found in London.

The latest releases include nothing to compare with either of these, but *East of the Rising Sun* (21/12/49) is first-rate entertainment, thrilling, full of crisp well-written dialogue, and played with great expertise; and *After Midnight* (4/1/50) is a good example of an Alan Ladd action-and-pursuit picture.

RICHARD MALLETT



(Gigi)

Portrait of a Roué
Honré Lachaille-Burfler—JEAN TISSIER

to this "fictionized" biography without suggesting that they were grafted on, without striking a note in an uncomfortably different key. The biography is of a U.S.N. rear-admiral (GARY COOPER) who at the start of the picture is leaving his ship to go into retirement; the highlights of his life from 1921 onwards are thereafter seen in flashback. He was a pioneer of naval aviation. Since 1921, when he was among those who learned to land a plane on the sixty-five-foot deck of the first makeshift aircraft-carrier, he has been in perpetual conflict with "battleship admirals" sceptical of the carrier's usefulness and isolationist politicians who doubt even the need for a navy. The first half of the picture establishes this situation. Then comes Pearl Harbour, in



"Intruder"

Jonathan L. Scott—GARY COOPER

Mary Morgan—JANE WYATT

ELSINORE—THE FACTS

ONE place where guesses about a possible Fortinbras offensive ("Norway, Denmark Face Flare-Up," Oct. 23rd) were not making many headlines last month was, unexpectedly, right inside this latest Baltic trouble-zone, where a royal drama with all the makings of a first-class whodunit looked like holding attention against anything short of a full-scale military breakthrough.

Even to casual observers something more than ordinarily rotten had been obvious in the pocket-sized state of Denmark (capital, Elsinore) ever since official hand-outs on the death from "snake-bite" ("Mystery Shrouds Royal Funeral," Nov. 6th) of reigning monarch Hamlet I had named younger and so far little-known brother Claudius as new ruler.

Delicate, to say the least, was the position of Denmark's most eligible bachelor, inky-cloaked, Wittenburg-educated Prince Hamlet, only child of the late king and, by our standards, himself next-in-line for the far-from-enviable throne up in draughty Elsinore Castle.

To one and a half million broad-minded Danes a speedy match between Claudius and young, popular, royal widow Gertrude had seemed at first no cause for more than the minimum of mild eyebrow-lifting. Interest perked up considerably, though, after an upper-crust Elsinore audience had watched the performance, reportedly Hamlet-sponsored, of an otherwise run-of-the-mill spine-chiller, "Murder of Gonzago," which seems to have done more than just hint at something very different from the official snake-bite story—even (according to eye-witnesses) pointing an accusing finger at Claudius in person.

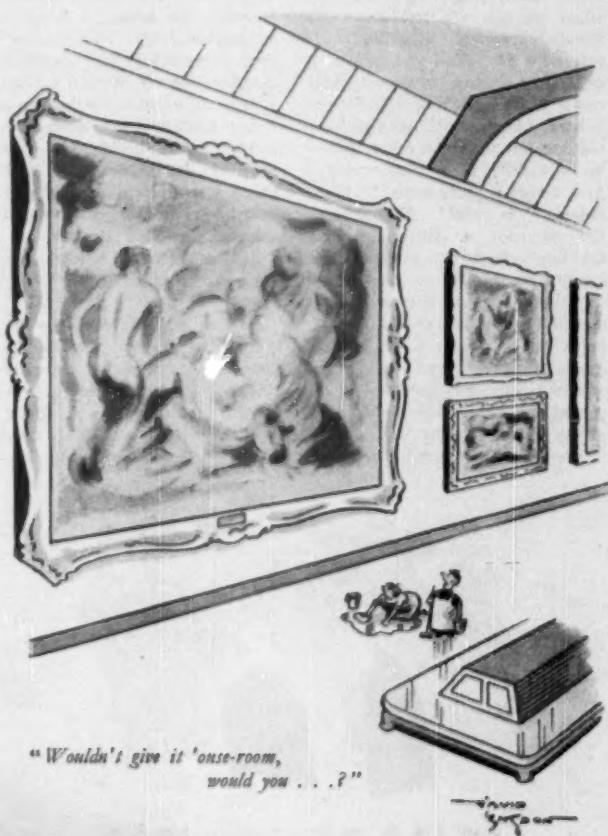
Typical of the rumours circulating among superstitious Danes as undercover speculation grew to nationwide proportions was a report of the late king's spectral appearance to son and friends during routine defence check-up out on high, gloomy royal palace battlements: an interview stylily dated, however, as during large-scale

junkettings following the royal wedding. Plausible or not, the story could undoubtedly come in useful should the prince ever feel like having Elsinore's two-dozen rusty cannon salute him as Hamlet II of Denmark.

Of almost greater interest to romantically-minded Danes was what looked like a sudden cooling-off between the saturnine prince and Ophelia ("Blue-Birds Over Elsinore," Oct. 2nd), teen-age daughter of prosy, baldish, friend-of-the-family, Chancellor Polonius—reason, almost certainly the latter's cagy, ear-to-the-ground disposition, with Hamlet now widely tagged as probable anti-Claudius element number one.

Whether Denmark was in fact due for an internal showdown was still in doubt as Elsinore learnt of the hurried departure, officially for a Paris vacation, of Laertes, playboy son of Polonius and intimate of Hamlet. With the Norway threat imminent and the attitude of Poland anybody's guess, chances were that for the moment Claudius would play a waiting game in palace politics. In court circles Hamlet (who is described as knowing a hawk from a handsaw) was considered not the man to take arms against what could easily be a sea of troubles without studying all the angles.

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TO FACE PAGE . . .

WHY don't they illustrate books these days?

Once upon a time no novel, no long poem, was complete without its pictures, dusky things in shades of pale cocoa on highly glazed paper; and sometimes even a coloured frontispiece was included. How we loved them! What atmosphere and piquancy they added to the story, conveying to the casual eye a vision of excitements and dramatic incidents, tense and terrifying moments in the unfolding of the plot! "*Angeline!*" *Rupert* exclaimed. To face page 136. (Tall young man with wispy moustache in Norfolk cycling suit, back view of young female with abundant hair, rudimentary bustle, and sweeping train, grand piano with large pot plant on it.) Or perhaps, "*No, Edwin,*" murmured *Charlotte*. To face page 87. (Tall young man in frock coat, young female with very small waist clutching heavily upholstered bosom with one hand and holding fan with the other, parrot in cage left, in a conservatory.) And, a very popular scene, "*Alice! Beloved!*" he cried. To face page 194, showing a distraught man kneeling by bedside in sombre room, lovely face framed by long tresses on pillow, obvious doctor slightly turned away in background. Sometimes the title would be "*Oh, speak, speak!*" and the more powerful writers favoured "*He covered his face with his hands,*" with a picture making him do so.

Good as these were in their way

they were surpassed by the scenes the artists gave us in the books by Anthony Hope and F. Marion Crawford. Indeed, an artist who could fail with such material would have been drummed out of the Royal Academy with brushes reversed and palette knives broken. The scenes emerge vividly from the mists of memory . . . dense, dark forests of towering pines, Gothic turrets on awesome crags, vertiginous roads clinging to cliffs overhanging raging torrents, foresters and huntsmen, curly-moustached counts, jolly peasants quaffing wine from lidded tankards. A frontispiece in stark black-and-white would show a snow-covered road through the *Wald*, and stars above the tops of the trees; in the foreground, racing towards the artist, a britzka, or troika, or sleigh (what matter the type of vehicle! The names are a delight), drawn at the gallop by a pair of mettlesome horses with flying manes, wide nostrils, and frantic eyes; beside the bushy-bearded driver sat the terrified Princess Hildegarde, smothered in bearskins, hands clasped in anguish; astern, dim and sinister in the shadows, wolves, or hussars, or perhaps a pair of barons. "*Hasten, Iwan, oh, hasten!*" Page 285.

Those indeed were the days; there was never any spineless nonsense about social security in Ruritania or Cravonia, especially for the aristocracy.

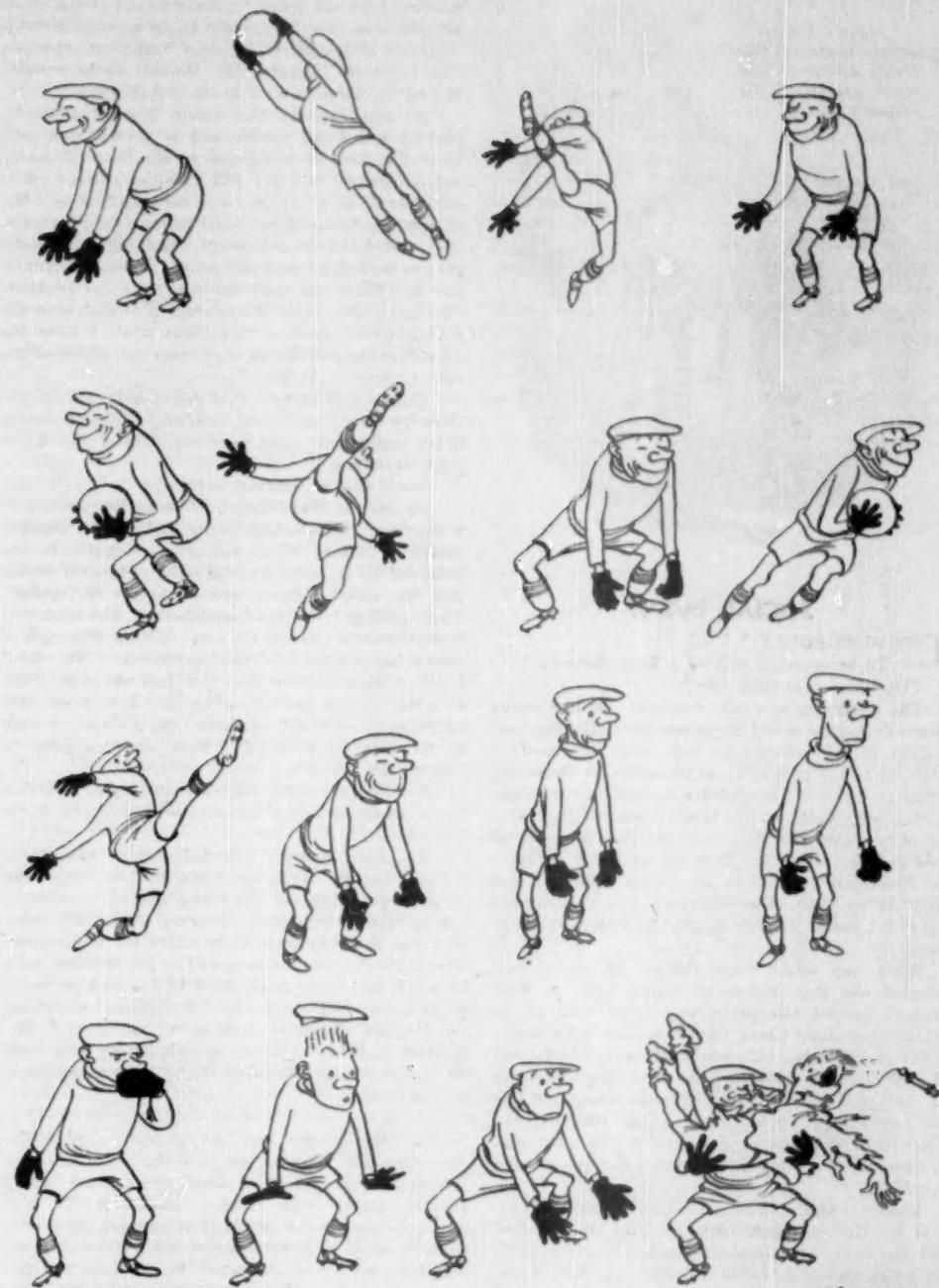
Conan Doyle was finely treated by the artists; Brigadier Gerard

galloped gallantly across many a page of the old *Strand* volumes, and the whole world knew the features of Sherlock Holmes as well as they knew his methods. But it was in the realm of boyhood that the illustrators found their noblest opportunities and reached their greatest heights. The doings of our heroes were portrayed with breathless brush and brilliant colour: Dick, with one arm in a sling, leaping over a sandbagged parapet ("*Charge!*"); Frank in a desperate struggle for life on the edge of a precipice ("*The half-breed reached for the knife!*"); Harry, in a narrow jungle trail, face to face with a gigantic, open-mouthed anaconda ("*He pressed the trigger. A misfire!*"). They gave us good value, eschewing refinements and subtleties and packing the whole frame of the picture with bursting shells and zooming Fokkers, writhing tendrils of tropical creepers, faces at the window, or circling hordes of feathered Redskins.

The modern psychological novel certainly presents difficulties to the illustrator. What could an artist make of three hundred pages of sensitive study of this, penetrating analysis of that, revealing something-or-other of something else, all in the first person singular and without a trace of either plot or characters? But then (we might as well be truthful) we don't *really* read that sort of book, and as there are lots of recent novels which are not so very modern after all, the publishers might at least make the effort to restore to our drab shelves the boldly illustrated volumes of yester-year. An omnibus *Hornblower*, pictures by Picasso, would be a certain dollar-earner. So would a collected edition of the Peter Cheyneys, India paper, limp morocco, frontispieces by Salvador Dali. Ben Nicholson, with a few geometrical abstractions, would deal admirably with *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, the next time a new edition of that great work is planned. And to usher in the renaissance may we not hope for an entirely new issue of Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*, profusely illustrated by Sir Alfred Munnings?



"Stand back and give him some air — pass it on."



"Ho-ho! Election's getting nearer. This Health Service medicine tastes exactly like Napoleon brandy."



SOCIAL EVENT

CURMUDGEONLY. "To be expected only of a Kent-Barnaby." "One does more than pale."

The picnic tea was not a success. After keeping silence during the cereal the guests were allowing their feelings to get voiced. In vain their hostess drew attention to the pink icing on the cakes, to the multiplicity of layers in the Wonder Sponge, to the robins on the paper napkins. Mr. Harbett scraped the cream out of his éclair and the chocolate from the top and eschewed the rest. Mr. Blunting wrote his name in the desiccated coconut on his cream sandwich and left it on his plate. Miss Wilsonby, refusing a second cup of tea, asked whether the first had been Indian or China.

What had made these visitors so critical and annoyed was that instead of taking place in their hostess's garden the party was being held at an eighteenth-century Greek temple several miles away, on the grounds that this would mix some sightseeing into the meal and improve it. Mrs. Kent-Barnaby had been pleased with herself when she thought of this treat; she did not know that the guests suspected her of not wishing passers-by to lean over the hedge and see them on her premises. They felt they were being kept dark.

A piece of plaster flaked from a pillar into the turn-up of Mr. Harbett's hat. A small, hard biscuit rolled down the flight of steps and was checked by a Caryatid's arm which had come off in a storm. As Mrs. Kent-Barnaby knelt on the cold marble trying to thread prickers into the pressure-stove she felt a desolation

exuding from the scene. Hoping to put things on an altogether merrier footing she began to carol blithely. "Massa's in de cold, cold ground," rang out her voice. "Lucky devil!" snarled Mr. Harbett as he moodily flicked his teaspoon at a headless goddess.

At this moment the errant wind, waywardly playing round the portico and between the statues, carried a sheet of newspaper to her feet. Reaching behind her, for she was still kneeling, she turned to examine it as a refuge from her perplexities. She skipped the market reports and the snooker championship and found a column in which an anonymous peeress replied to questions on social life and how to live it. There she read the answer to her problem. "I often find," wrote Marchioness X, "that even the stodgiest rout becomes a success when I have the guests act like well-known characters out of literature, such as Scarlett O'Hara."

With a gay little clap of her hands Mrs. Kent-Barnaby sprang to her feet and, forgetting her caution in her enthusiastic relief, cried out, "Guess what we're going to do now!"

"Go," said Mr. Harbett hopefully.

On this cue Miss Wilsonby drew on her gloves with a lingering elegance and, rising to her feet, began a speech of thanks whose minimum of gratitude was balanced by its maximum of style. Chiselled to the last, she ended, "*Agrez mes salutations distinguées.*" Then, trailing her parasol meditatively, she sauntered down the steps towards the car. With a little rush of speech her hostess tried to stop the rot. "Oh, dear! I didn't mean to hint that you had outstayed your welcome. I was just going to remark that we were all going to represent someone from a book. I shall be the Vicar of Wakefield. What are you going to choose, Mr. Blunting?"

Mr. Blunting looked affronted and replied, "If this last indignity is indeed inescapable I shall choose Sir Robert Peel."

Mrs. Kent-Barnaby objected that he was not in a book; but Mr. Blunting argued that he was in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and she humoured him by turning with an inquiring nod to Miss Wilsonby, who was hovering uncertainly about the lower steps. Miss Wilsonby was rather proud of her reading, most of which had been done aloud to her mother many years before, and with a superior smile said she would be Dracula. Without waiting to be invited Mr. Harbett said that as he was already sitting on a stone he would be the Wedding Guest, and asked what happened next.

The Marchioness had not mentioned what the characters did. Indeed, she gave the impression that the mere assumption of false personalities would liberate gaiety and remove constraint. It was obviously too late for any kind of guessing game and, while it would be possible to impose forfeits on those who behaved out of character, Mr. Harbett was not a man from whom forfeits could be easily extracted. The only course left was to award prizes for the most

skillful representation. As soon as Mrs. Kent-Barnaby had announced this, Mr. Harbett claimed that the chief characteristic of the Wedding Guest was impatience to be gone and that nothing could possibly be more realistic than his playing of the part. This threw discord among the hitherto united guests.

Miss Wilsonby complained that much as she disliked having to enact anybody she was at least entitled to alleviate her misery by having the opportunity of competing for a prize. Mr. Blunting, meanwhile, had risen to his feet and with a sawing movement of his arm was declaiming such fragments of the Tamworth Manifesto as he could remember, eking them out with picturesque phrases drawn from other orators. "The correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances of the people, by the people, for the people," he thundered. At this point Miss Wilsonby was carried away by a surge of verisimilitude and bit him.

Although there was warrant enough for her action in the book wherein the character appeared, Miss Wilsonby, judged by the narrow standards of polite conduct, was in the wrong. It is not recorded that anyone, not even Disraeli, ever bit Peel, and to enhance the vividness of one's own characterization at the expense of a fellow-competitor is contrary to the spirit of fair play and possibly to that of common decency. Scarcely had she withdrawn her teeth when this aspect of the question occurred to her. To retrieve her poise she withdrew from the contest and, as the hostess could scarcely be in the running for a prize which, in any case, she already owned, the decision remained between the men. To the suggestion that there should be a short recess while Mr. Blunting got back into the skin of his part Mr. Harbett objected that anything which prolonged the proceedings would be vetoed by him. He then cupped his hand to his ear and announced that he heard the loud bassoon. It was, he added, playing "Here comes the bride."

Strained beyond endurance, Mrs. Kent-Barnaby burst out. "You both get a prize; it's a tie."

"I refuse to split a tie with Blunting, especially one chosen by a woman," said Mr. Harbett.

"The prize is . . ." Mrs. Kent-Barnaby was starting to explain, when a cry from Miss Wilsonby stopped her.

Waving the torn newspaper which the wind had blown from Mrs. Kent-Barnaby's feet to hers, she read out another quotation from the Marchioness: "To prolong a tea-time visit beyond an hour is generally reckoned a sign of hailing from the wrong side of the tracks." Then, showing her watch triumphantly to her fellow-guests, she led them helter-skelter down the steps.

R. G. G. PRICE

"Last night Albert Einstein gave to the world a new comic theory . . . Dr. Einstein has been working on this theory for thirty years." —*Irish paper*

Mr. Punch has to move a little faster.

THOUGHTS WHILE DRESSING FOR THE BALL

ENVOYS, ambassadors, admirals, cardinals, captains, kings

Flutter like leaves in autumn down when Azrael beats his wings;

Chariot and cannon rust and crumble, tucket and fanfare fade;

Dust is the dome of studded gold, the ivory colonnade, Impi and legion, Tartar war-horde, phalanx and scarlet square,

Galliaasse, galleon, towering flagship—melted all into air!

Beneath the moon stands nothing enduring—all things vanish away:

Where now is Babylon? and where the Empire of Cathay?

Where is the Ruler of all the Russias? Where the Prince of the Blood?

And where in the name of Beelzebub is my blasted collar-stud?

G. D. R. DAVIES



THE WO



THE team of greys
strain in the ruts
and, squelching,
the wood cutts
move a yard
or two, then wait,
but in the end
they reach the gate;
and no tractor,
however new,
could shift these oaks
as horses do—
no power-driven wheels
could get
a grip in all this
muck and wet.
The gears are good,
the leather's good,
and the old cutts
have always stood
for eighty years,
or maybe longer—
for, mended-up,
they're always stronger.

We swear like thunder—
threaten blood—
but pull these oak-trees
out the wood . . .

And who was it
who planted these



D CUTTS

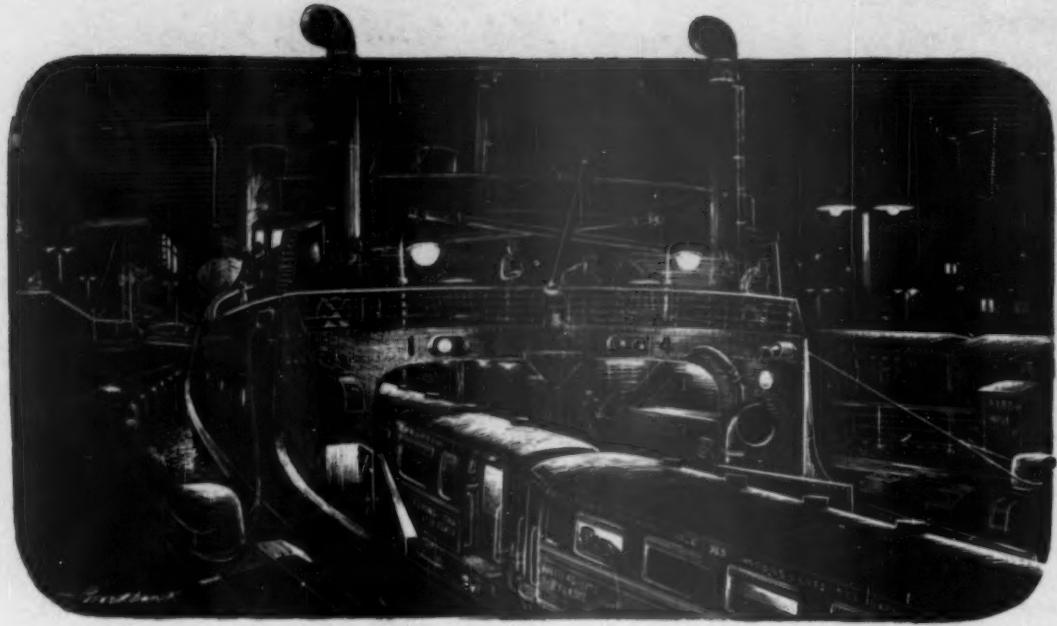
solid oaks—
these great old trees!
Some Tudor squire,
dour and stout:
a chap who threw
his weight about!
Some castled baron,
bluff and gay,
who planted for
another day! . . .
We do not know—
it takes some knowing—
for oak takes time
when it is growing.

And my forefathers,
I've no doubt,
were helping squire,
hereabout,
and with coarse oath
and ribald joke
they planted walnut,
elm and oak—
it's funny folk
of their own blood
should haul their timber
out the wood!

And maybe sons
of ours will want
to come along
and help replant . . .

JESSE BAGGLEY





CRADLE OF THE DEEP

Night Ferry to Paris

THE idea of snoring all the way from Victoria to the Gare du Nord sounds fascinating—but the delusiveness of non-stop trains which stop frequently, and of round-the-world aircraft which (one gathers) are constantly coming down for air, suggest to the man bent on sweet repose from London to Paris that he may, in practice, have to keep changing his bed on the way or at the least play host to the Customs officials in the small hours. Not so. Let all sceptics be ashamed of themselves. With Customs formalities obligingly restricted to the journey's extremities sleeping-car passengers entraining at Victoria are embarked at Dover with the gentlest of shuntings, deboated at Dunkirk with equal care, and—only dimly conscious of the effeminate whistles and volatile brakings which mark transition to the rails of France—are delivered at the Gare du Nord in magnificent form for their short business conference or long, grueling drive to the winter sports. They can sleep all the way, and since that

is what most of them do they may be interested to learn what happens while they do it.

The first thing that these cross-Channel slumberers missed was the somewhat unnerving appearance of the waiting boat. Her stern thrown rashly open to receive the coaches of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-lits et des Grands Express Européens (Chemins-de-fer Britanniques keep their rolling-stock at home), she looks as if her after-half has been sliced off in a typhoon and the rest of her freakishly washed up in the middle of Clapham Junction. Until her cargo rumbles aboard she is firmly bolted to the soil of Dover, united by a form of drawbridge with the permanent-way of British Railways, four of whose tracks thus run unbroken off the edge of England on to the *Shepperton's* train-deck. But Mr. Punch's Night Ferry Correspondent asks himself what is to happen when that last link with home is severed . . . and the boat settles under two hundred and

thirty tons of sleeping-cars! What assurance is there that the inadequate-looking gates at her stern will keep either the coaches in or the Channel out? Fair stands the wind for France, and stands, what is more, at Force Seven, or rather more than half a gale . . . A number of diverting speculations (denied the sleeping passengers) occupy Mr. P.'s N.F.C. right up to the time that Captain Coulter, dark, dapper, duffed, gives the order to cast off—and for a few anxious moments afterwards.

However, as my fellow-passengers are aware, the *Shepperton* did not sink, but wallowed matter-of-factly out under the watery moon and so, as the captain put it flippantly to the man at the wheel, "round the corner and down the middle." The coaches below (they were shunted on amiably by a bronchitic old semi-retired engine) had been chained and wedged with conscientious care—sixteen chains to each, with links the size of boxing-gloves, and adjustable, roll-resisting stanchions. Their occupants, breathing deeply behind

drawn blinds, need have no thought for the life-saving apparatus stowed on the overhead rack or the neatly-arrowed directions to "Life-boats. Canots."

For their further peace of mind the sleepers in the deep are unaware that up on the bridge and in and out of the wheel-house (according to the roll of the ship) there lurches a wild and alien figure with a notebook and pencil between its teeth: Mr. P.'s N.F.C., debarred by the elements from either asking questions or writing down the answers, owes his presence up there to the impressively nautical conversation of Mr. Punch's Artist; able to out-bawl the gale on such topics as port hand buoys, free-board and the Beaufort scale he distracts the captain's attention from the dangerous staggerings of his second guest among the delicate instruments of navigation. It is not until the following day, on the faintly heaving pavements of the Rue de Rivoli, that Mr. P.'s A. reveals quite another purpose in these exchanges: it seems that his experiences in a variety of craft have never included a roll quite so intriguing as that of the *Shepperton*, and he was anxious to compare notes with the captain. . . .

At about two in the morning, after an especially painful ricochet

off the helmsman's elbow on to the radar installation, Mr. P.'s N.F.C. reminds himself that he is not here to enjoy himself; he has work to do, and must go below and do it. He therefore spreadeagles himself down a series of companion-ways on to the train-deck to note the passengers' morale. It is good. They are all asleep. Here, in the very cradle of the deep, the rocking is barely perceptible. All is hushed. Indeed, notices enjoin "Silence please!" and members of the crew, soft-footed on coconut matting, creep watchfully hither and thither adjusting the gently creaking chains. From the heating-plants of the manacled coaches wisps of steam hiss thinly; battery-chargers are chugging (when immobile the sleeping-cars have to rely on their host for electricity) and below, with a rich shuddering, the ship's engines murmur a deeper note; white lights from above spill down the white, girded walls—no one could call them bulkheads; no one, carried here unconscious and suddenly waking, could imagine himself in a ship: a tram-depot, perhaps, or an engine-shed; even, at a stretch, a small and unusually spick and span dry-dock, but a ship, never. A few goods-wagons stand sullenly on the outer sets of rails, two or three motor-cars, in the very act of export, glisten here and there

in the deck corners—and against the neat coils of a fire hose leans a battered bicycle, suggesting the early morning dash of the cabin-boy, pedalling off through Dunkirk's tangle of dockyards to breakfast with the prettiest girl in France. As Mr. P.'s N.F.C. tiptoes back up the companion-way with this fanciful thought he is pursued by a single, prolonged, muffled but hugely luxuriating snore.

By this time the ship is running in

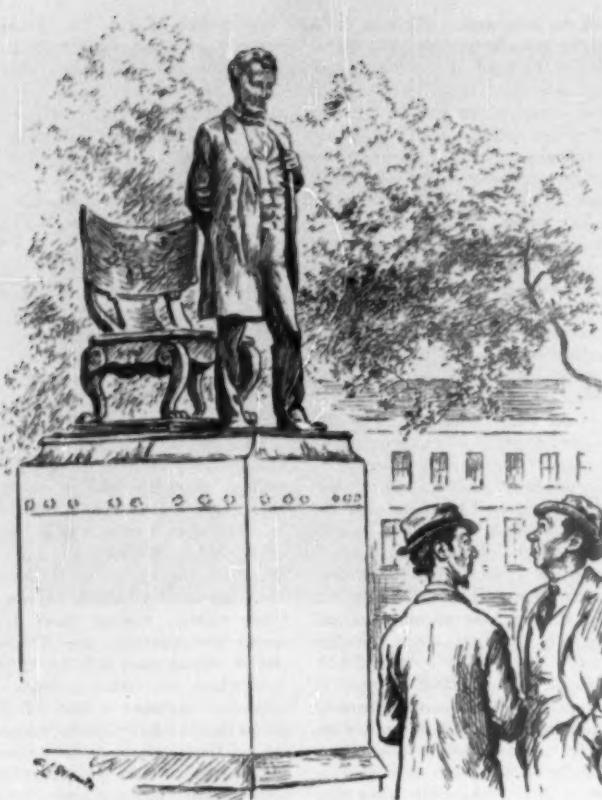
the shelter of the French coast; even on the bridge the world seems to have found its balance again; the skyline is climbing only half-way up the wheelhouse windows with every roll, the moon is clear, and two high, flashing lights stand out among the lesser twinklings of Dunkirk. Time passes. Two punctual tugs appear, to dance attendance on us, and presently we are gliding past the tip of the long, ruined jetty, black in the moonlight, which would have marked our journey's end ten years ago on a less peaceful night.

Now we have green lights winking a welcome . . . we are snailing into the lock, and the leading tug has a line aboard us . . . the winches rattle, and after a taut period of manoeuvring we come to rest. The pilot, a silent Frenchman who has been with us all the way, disengages himself from the shadows of the bridge. His services have not been called upon this time, though there are several lurking wrecks in these waters, among them that recent war casualty, the *Princess Astrid*, whose mast still marks the spot where she struck a lingering mine last summer. (One of the pilot's most useful functions, according to the captain, is to address tug-masters in their own language, a feat beyond the captain's power, even after thirty years at sea.) Now the lock-gates close slowly behind us and—for it is flood-tide—we begin to descend to dock-level. In another half-hour we are docked; another drawbridge has dropped on our stern and we are firmly clamped to the shores of France. The sleepers below await only a word from the French Railways, their shackles will be struck off, and away they will roar along the iron road to the Gare du Nord. Still asleep. Unknowing, uncaring. Only the captain and crew are alive to the modest miracle which has been performed once more—for Mr. Punch's Representatives are only half alive. . . .

Yawning their farewells, they present a startling phenomenon: two Englishmen bound for Paris with only one idea in their minds—the idea of, as soon as possible, snoring all the way back.

J. B. BOOTHROYD





"Waste, I call it. Nobody's ever sat on it."

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

"**M**Y family," Tomaso used to say proudly, "have *always* fired the gun."

He was almost right. The gun had always been fired by his family; always, that is, since its capture from the Austrians, or the Hungarians, or the Serbs (no one quite knew) in 1862, or 1628, or 1286 (it didn't really matter). After its demobilization the gun was employed by the victorious republic of San Severo for firing salutes on important occasions. The republic of San Severo has an area of thirty square miles and a population of ten thousand, more or less, and its glorious history was acquired chiefly

by hanging on to the coat-tails of neighbouring, more powerful states; but that does not prevent the San Severese, indomitably festive by nature, from holding a jubilee on every possible pretext. Such things are good for the tourist trade, and the tourist trade is the second most important factor in the balancing of San Severo's budget.

The most important factor, of course, is the postage revenue. Ever since the Universal Postal Union of 1874 first opened the eyes of the *Capitani Reggiani* San Severo has issued a commemorative set of stamps, in rather a small edition, for almost every event in the calendar,

whether directly concerning San Severo or not. These are snapped up by philatelists the world over, and if there are sometimes too few in the San Severo post office to supply the day-to-day needs of the citizens the citizens need only walk down the mountain into Italy to find all the stamps they want and a regular postal service to go with them.

It is said that when there is an election, saint's day, anniversary, bigamy-trial, or other public celebration, there are always two eager, cheering throngs—one in the Piazza, outside the Council Chamber, and the other round the corner, outside the post office. As soon as normal business is resumed (and the post office always opens on such occasions) the excited concourse storm the doors and the entire new issue of stamps is sold out within an hour.

But let us get back to Tomaso and his gun.

The gun stands in the Piazza, in front of the Council Chamber. The Piazza, like everything else in the city of San Severo, slopes steeply—San Severo being situated at the top of a three-thousand-foot mountain—so it is fairly safe to fire the gun on public holidays, even when the Piazza is crowded, as anything besides smoke that might accidentally come out of the barrel is sure to go above the heads of the people.

It is safe, that is, from the people's point of view; Tomaso not long ago discerned his own—he thinks—tremendous danger. He discovered recently that when he pulled the lanyard to fire the gun a puff of smoke came not only from the muzzle but also from the breech. Tomaso made a complaint to the mayor, who fobbed him off by doubling the amount given him for his services.

"That," Tomaso said, "is another thing about which I have been meaning to speak."

The mayor invited him to speak on.

"Alone of all the citizens of the republic," Tomaso said, "I am unable to go to the post office when there is a new set of stamps. When I have fired my gun and cleaned it there are no stamps left. To compensate me for this—"

"Would you like me to find someone else to fire the gun?" asked the mayor.

"My family," Tomaso told him, "have *always* fired the gun."

But the next time he had to perform, Tomaso, reckoning that not even for *two* litres of red wine would he so endanger his life, used a much-reduced charge, and the gun made only a miserable little pop. The crowds whistled and hissed at Tomaso in their disappointment, and the unhappy *artillerista* found himself unable to decide whether his fear of the gun was not less than his fear of a lynching. Unluckily for him, only three days later came the anniversary of the relief of Monte Grappa, and he had to officiate again. He restored the full charge, but compromised by firing the gun with a lanyard about a yard longer than the old one, which had served him since he took over from his father. When he saw the puff of thick yellow smoke that emerged from the breech he was extremely grateful for the extra distance, and decided to add another yard for the

feast of San Ildebrando the following Tuesday.

On the Feast of San Ildebrando a little piece of metal flew off the gun and struck him in the stomach. Tomaso besought the mayor, on his knees, to have the gun overhauled; but the annual elections were due in a week, when the gun would, by custom, have to make the biggest bang of the year.

"I could, of course, find—" the mayor began.

"My family—" said Tomaso.

"Just so," said the mayor.

Each day during that next week Tomaso went to the mayor with a fresh idea for increasing his safety. Could he be provided with a suit of mediaeval armour to impress the tourists? Would it not be more in keeping with the times to mount the gun in the old German tank rusting away half-way down the mountain? Did the mayor not think that the gun's report spoiled the fanfare of trumpets? The mayor was firm: if Tomaso would not fire the gun, someone else must. "Very well," Tomaso said on the election

eve. "So I shall die for my country and become a hero."

"That will be nice," the mayor agreed.

"On second thoughts," said Tomaso, "I believe I do not wish to become a hero so soon. I have thought of something."

"Excellent," said the mayor.

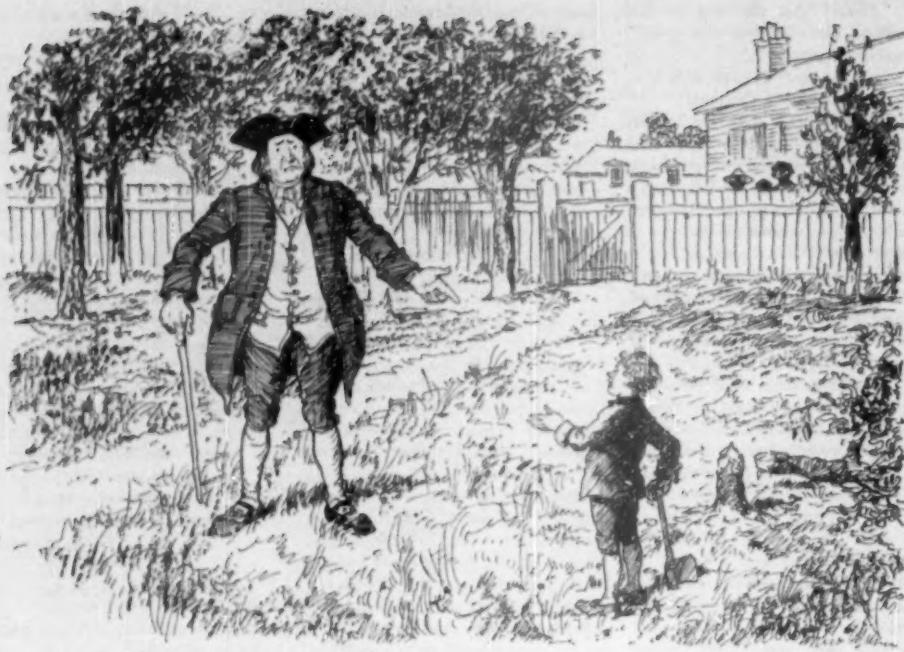
Next day, when the newly-elected *Capitani Reggiani* came in state out of the Council Chamber, Tomaso was nowhere to be seen. He was, in point of fact, at the other end of a lanyard a hundred and fifty yards long, exactly long enough to reach from the Council Chamber to the post office. From this safe distance he jerked the lanyard; the gun blew up with a terrific report; and the mayor was killed instantly.

Tomaso, on the other hand, was able, for the first time, to secure a complete set of the new stamps.

B. A. YOUNG

"HOME—Mine was washed ashore at Blackpool."—"Daily Graphic"
Well, it's made you independent of building controls.





"And moreover, Father, modern thought tends to place the primary responsibility for juvenile delinquency with the parents."

THE DOUBLE-DECKER

Thoughts on the introduction of double-decker buses to the Lake District (where the centenary of Wordsworth's death is due to be commemorated this year.)

BEHOLD it, driven in swift career,
Yon doubled-decked omnibus!
It skirts the shore of Windermere,
And now it stops for us.
No horse-drawn chaise did e'er approach
The speed of this mechanic coach.
The top will seat a score or so,
And just as many sit below.

No longer need the climber trudge
In heavy boots along the road.
The modest fare he does not grudge,
But gladly sheds his load.
He sits at ease and rests his back,
Much wearied by his ponderous sack,
A burden of such weight profound
It bowed him almost to the ground.

The waiting queue can scarce believe
That no one will be left behind;
But this conveyance can relieve
The fear that haunts each mind.
A bus so spacious never plied
"Twixt Keswick town and Ambleside,
Startling the Herdwick sheep that graze
On the green slopes of Dunmail Raise.

Conspicuous as the scarlet bloom
That ripens to a runner bean,
This vehicle is seen to loom
Amid the hedgerows green.
And once I saw it mirrored clear
In the still depths of Rydal Mere . . .
That image in my heart I bore
Long after it was seen no more.

AT THE PLAY

Beauty and the Beast (MERCURY AND PLAYERS' THEATRES)

THIS week I have seen a new Christmas play that restores a lot of lost faith. In relation to the vast music-hall compounds that now pass for pantomime it stands as do those occasional and memorable films, produced on a shoestring in a barn, to the million-dollar enormities that one forgets on the way home. Young and old in the audience clapped this little gem equally, the gap between their tastes being bridged by artistic integrity and by humour and imagination that were not watered down for the children nor stiffened up with artful sophistication for their elders. This latest variant of *Beauty and the Beast* is by Mr. NICHOLAS STUART GRAY, and if it is not to be seen next year on one of the smaller West End stages then managers will deserve the harsh words sometimes applied to them. Parents who banch at the soggiest elfin rhapsodies can be assured that the flavour of Mr. GRAY's extravagance is as dry as it is charming.

At the Mercury the piece is put on with a calculated simplicity that is very pleasing. A few flowers bright with absurdity, that might have sprung from Disney's studio, a shaft of light falling with cunning across a window—these do more to launch magic than realism could ever compass. All credit to Miss MARY



[Mercury Theatre]

Medieval Monster

The Beast—Mr. JOHN BYRON; *The Wizard*—Mr. HUGH PRYSE
Beauty—Miss CAROL MARSH; *Milay*—Mr. BARRY MACGREGOR

MORRIS's production and Miss JOAN JEFFERSON FARJEON's décor. From the delicate pantaloons of the merchant's daughters to the last pathetic whisker of the *Beast* the trappings are a delight.

New twists abound. The *Wizard* (Mr. HUGH PRYSE) is a pottering university professor with a bad memory, who turns the arrogant *Prince* (Mr. JOHN BYRON) into a beast, partly because of rudeness and partly to show off to his young nephew (Mr. BARRY MACGREGOR—a dragon). For five hundred years this grossly incompetent sorcerer forgets about his victim, until 1840, when we are introduced to the domestic bliss of a sober merchant

(Mr. DONALD FINLAY) and his three dutiful daughters (Miss CAROL MARSH is *Beauty*, the Misses JILL RAYMOND and JUNE RODNEY are *Jessamine* and *Jonquiline*). The *Wizard* takes the *Merchant* into the *Beast's* garden to pluck a rose for *Beauty*, and after that you can roughly guess the scenario. Effects are splendidly timed and unusually ingenious. Flights are accompanied by a supersonic whistle, there is a lie-detector which should be fitted immediately at the Old Bailey, and the wilting of *Beauty's* rose is the saddest thing you could see. My only

complaint is that the third act slows up a trifle and would be better for a bigger ration of *Wizard*. The acting is good, especially that of Miss MARSH, Mr. PRYSE and Mr. BYRON.

Beauty and the Beast made up my week. I have left far less space than it merits to the uproarious performance at the Players' Theatre, where Mr. ARCHIE HARRADINE has adapted the version of the same story by J. R. PLANCHÉ that was first put on in the year of Mr. Punch's birth. It brims over with the devilish puns that were PLANCHÉ's legacy to Gilbert, but its early Victorian transports are given a sure touch of quick burlesque that keeps them funny. The staging is clever and the singing lusty. Miss DAPHNE ANDERSON's guileless *Beauty*, Mr. G. GORDON's sonorous *Beast* and Miss R. HILL's sardonic *Queen* are the pick of a knowing team. And the Harlequinade at the finish is a riot of nice clowning.

That I can thank two little theatres for my best Christmas double certainly gives food for thought.

ERIC KEOWN



(Players' Theatre)

Victorian Monster

The Beast—Mr. G. GORDON
Beauty—Miss DAPHNE ANDERSON

Recommended

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY—New—Another Old Vic success.

BLACK CHIFFON—Westminster—Flora Robson superb in good family drama.

CASTLE IN THE AIR—Adelphi—Polished fooling by Jack Buchanan and Coral Browne.

HALF-HOUR AT PANGLE'S

IT should take no time to walk into the butcher's and fetch a little parcel of meat waiting ready-wrapped on the marble slab, with the bill on top. That it never seemed to take less than half an hour of Mrs. Barley's Saturday was something she put down to the village's Sunday dinner, to human nature in general and to the extraordinary niceness of the butcher himself.

The omens to-day were good: a couple of retrievers moored to the tree, one high curved bicycle propped against it, and inside the shop only half a dozen people. At the head of this small queue, which, of course, was not a queue in the ordinary meaning of the word, stood the retrievers' owner, a huge woman who was saying in a great cracked voice: "Got any bones, Pangle?"

Mr. Pangle (as everyone else called him) smiled in happy anticipation, dived under the slab and brought out a bone like a dumb-bell.

"That's the stuff!" cried the woman as he began sawing. "Six-inch pieces, there's a good soul."

"Will you be needing the whole bone, Miss Hunt?" said Mr. Pangle, glancing along it.

"Well, if it's all the same to you——"

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Mr. Pangle. "You're welcome. It's just that not everybody wants a bone this size." And he bent again to his sawing.

"Wonderful things, pressure-cookers," a woman in a pixie-hood

was saying to another woman in a pixie-hood.

Mr. Pangle's face lit up, and he stopped sawing. "Why, Janet! Elsie asked me to tell you, after you'd gone she was turning out the sink-tidy and——"

"Go on!" said the pixie-hood. "You haven't found it."

Silently, and with a fine feeling for drama, Mr. Pangle put down his saw, marched up the steps through the door at the back and marched back with something in the palm of his hand.

"It is!" cried the pixie-hood. "Mavis, come here and look!" There was a bit of a scuffle as the second pixie-hood tripped over the huge woman's shopping-basket, but it was drowned by the scuffle at the door as a glamorous young woman burst through and gasped "I say, everyone, I'm awfully sorry, but I've got someone else's car waiting. Mr. Pangle, can you be a darling and spare me a spot of whatever? We're back, you see."

"Why, good afternoon, Miss Hollis," said Mr. Pangle, hurrying round the pixies. "Did you have a good holiday?"

"Oh, it was wonderful, quite wonderful," said Miss Hollis. "When you think that this time two days ago I was sitting on a beach—and Mr. Pangle, the steaks!"

Mr. Pangle had been about to run up the steps and through the sitting-room to his refrigerator, but he waited with his nicest smile. However, there was a sudden cry of "June, my dear, I wouldn't have

recognized you!" and in the ensuing set-to he disappeared, only (Mrs. Barley deduced) to be caught by the arrival of his mother-in-law and by the telephone. When he got back Miss Hollis was showing her friend a scarf, and it was some time before he could draw her attention to the two hookfuls he was inviting her to choose from.

"Oh, sure, anything," said Miss Hollis. "I don't know lamb from beef." A small wave of gratitude ran through the shop, which was now rather fuller.

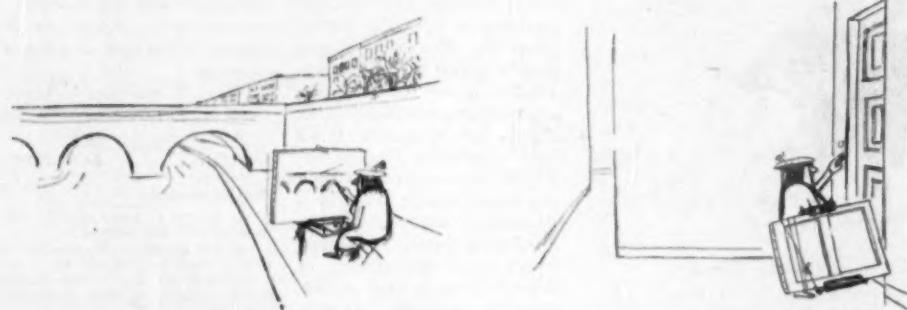
"All right, then, ducky, ask him," said an encouraging voice, and a tiny girl squeezed through to hold out a bag and say "Wool you have a swootie?"

"Why, thank you, my dear," said Mr. Pangle, putting down his knife. "Perhaps you'll find me one." He raised his voice. "She doesn't forget, does she? How's the little boy, Mrs. Arthur?"

"Going on lovely," cried Mrs. Arthur. "There now, ducky!" This was because her daughter, having dug out a toffee wrapped in blue paper, had dropped it into Miss Hunt's shopping-basket and burst into tears. There was a helpful rush, but Mr. Pangle was already on his knees pulling out soap and tins of spaghetti.

"Got him in the pram here!" Mrs. Arthur shouted. Mr. Pangle dusted his knees and hurried to the door. For a baby-viewer he was back in good time, but Miss Hunt had already found the toffee.

"That's a nice pair of setters



there, Miss Hunt," he said, taking his toffee, but before she could correct him a high sweet voice outside piped "Mr. Pangle! I say! What about the weights for my baby-scales?"

Mr. Pangle durted back to the door. "It's lucky you called, Mrs. Thompson, because the man'll be here Tuesday. Now, if you'll say how many and what kind—"

There was silence and a nervous giggle. "I can't think all of a sudden," said Mrs. Thompson. "I'll stay here and work it out while you carry on. Oh, I'm so sorry." She had trodden on the toe of the sub-postmaster, who was holding a pound note. "Me again, Jim," he said. "Why they never carry change nowadays I don't know."

"Not worth it," shouted Mrs. Arthur, and Mr. Pangle joined in the laugh before disappearing into his sitting-room. When he had told his mother-in-law what the laugh was about and handed over the change he took up his knife with the air of a man beginning a new chapter of life.

"Now," he said. He seized the beef, hit it, slapped on the fat, whisked the string round it, whacked the paper on the scales, flung on the meat, hustled it into its wrapping and thrust it into Miss Hollis's outstretched hand. It was, as a tall man remarked, a breath-taking performance.

"You get the knack," said Mr. Pangle modestly, cracking a length off the dumb-bell bone and moving his saw along another six inches.

ANDE

THE VEHICLE IS STATIONARY

"WHEN is it forbidden to use the warning instrument?" he said.

"Between the hours of 11.30 p.m. and 7 a.m.," I said, promptly.

"Where?"

"Where?" This was one of those tricky questions I had been warned about. "They'll catch you out somehow," even my best friends had told me, "especially if you look like a chap who uses a motor-bike purely for pleasure." So I'd gone along to the market town of G—— in my pre-war overcoat and a cloth cap, looking like a man who scrapes up a miserable living as an election agent's assistant or something. So far all had gone well with my driving-test and I felt quietly confident that the "L" plates which had badgered me for so long would soon be on the kitchen fire.

"Where?" I said.

"That's it," said the examiner. "Where?"

Suddenly I got it. A page of the Highway Code, with a large asterisk against the appropriate paragraph, became momentarily floodlit in my mind.

"In built-up areas," I said.

There was no warm smile of congratulation, no encouraging pat on the head. These Ministry of Transport men are cool devils, as hard as nails.

"Any other time when it's forbidden to use the warning instrument?" he asked.

He stood there in the light drizzle, his hands deep in the pockets of his belted, military mackintosh and his clean-shaven

face a mask of practised inscrutability. I loathe all really clean-shaven men, the whole pack of them, and this fellow's chin was as smooth as bottle-glass and utterly flawless. I pushed my finger-tips through the nap of my offside jowl and listened to the comforting racket. *Warning instrument!* Why couldn't he say horn? Little Boy Blue come blow your warning instrument! Ha-ha!

"Well, I don't think I should sound it when passing a hospital," I said gamely.

"I see," he said. The crisp monosyllables did not deceive me, so I lunged again, trying to smash my way through to his approval by sheer fertility of invention.

"And I shouldn't use it passing a school," I said, "unless of course I had to."

"A school," he said. "I see."

"Then again," I went on breathlessly, "I shouldn't use it when other motorists were using *their* horns. Don't want superfluous noise, do we?"

This time he said nothing. It was as though he had already made up his mind, as though the proceedings were now only meaningless routine.

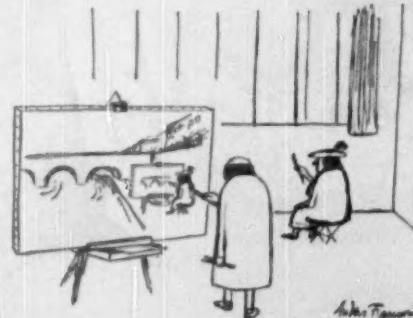
"I shouldn't sound my horn," I said, "as a greeting to a pedestrian."

"I see," he said.

"And I shouldn't use it among cattle in case it scared them—and never, never, in the lambing season."

"I see," he said.

"I'd try not to use it near houses with television aerials in case it interfered with reception," I said.



His eyebrows came down slowly, and the line of his mouth wavered slightly. I rushed on. Surely, he would realize eventually that a sensitive, thoughtful and imaginative driver has more right on the highway than an oaf who knows the letter of the law parrot-fashion.

"And naturally," I said, "I shouldn't use it between 11.30 p.m. and 7 a.m."

"You said that once," he barked.

I was poised on a knife-edge between success and failure. The result of the whole test depended on my answer. But I was finished; the well had dried up.

"You can't mean between 7 a.m. and 11.30 p.m." I said hopelessly. "That would be ludicrous, surely?"

"I'm asking you," he said.

I sat there astride the machine,

a broken man. As he opened his mouth to sentence me I made one last leap into the Highway Code.

"I shouldn't sound the—er—warning instrument in a built-up area," I said, "or, of course, when under the influence of drink or anything."

"I see," he said. "Well, I'm sorry to inform you, sir, that you've failed."

I moaned. He gave me a form, urged me to study the Code, plunged his hands into the pockets of his belted military mackintosh, said "Goodaf'noon," and strode away.

I started the engine, gave three loud blasts on the horn to remove a dog from my path and moved off.

As I passed him the examiner turned and grinned.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



VICARIOUS HOSPITALITY

THERE was a time when it was considered ill-mannered for a guest to smoke his own cigarettes in another man's home. There are those who still think it is. Others would argue (with some reason) that the cigarette-case has inherited the tradition of the snuff-box and is something which may be exchanged in courtesy between friends. Guests have not yet taken the further step of whipping flasks out of their pockets—though this would certainly be a logical extension of that hideous pre-war prostitution of hospitality, the bottle party, at which a man incited his guests to drink their own liquor and took the honours as the host of nothing beyond the electric light and the wear and tear of the carpet.

"Do ring up and ask yourself to lunch one day," is the jargon of another brand of vicarious hospitality, less obvious but infinitely more dishonest. The boisterously affable businessman can sound warm-hearted as he says it—but it is a strange notion of manners that places a man's generosity in the discretion of his guest. The meaning of the invitation is inescapable. Mr. Thing will be prepared to entertain you, provided you bother to make the arrangements yourself: otherwise not. It is at its best a confession of gross laziness; at its worst it is a form of words deceitfully calculated to promote a reputation for good-fellowship. But a man who can not be troubled to set a date to his hospitality is not hospitable at all. Punctual acceptance of every such invitation would excite the nicest possible Nemesis—though at the cost of taking lunch with a great many too many affable businessmen.

• •

Bon Voyage

Of Latin phrases
I know but two,
Terra firma for me,
Sic transit for you.

BOOKING OFFICE

Waifs and Strays

IT is because the teaching of history has been persistently romantic that we are inclined to say how much we should have preferred to live in some period other than our own. The eighteenth century has been the greatest snare. It can be made to sound a paradise of wit and grace and accomplishment, especially when viewed from a machine-age shadowed by anarchy. Few popular historians have cared to spoil the picture by reminding us of the brutality that flourished or of the inconveniences and worse that would have roused our disgust. And even the contemporary evidence most likely to come our way will probably only confirm the illusion that by not being born in 1750 we have missed true happiness. How easy to be impressed by Parson Woodforde's gargantuan hospitality and the touching kindness to his Norfolk villagers reflected on almost every page of his diary, and yet to miss the significance of his uncomfortable ride to see a corpse hanging in chains and of the inclusion among his duties of the public shaming of unmarried mothers.

If we are to look back honestly, and perhaps be more contented with our own times, we must now and then be ready to accept the painful lessons of such a book as Mrs. Mary Hopkirk's *Nobody Wanted Sam: The Story of the Unwelcome Child, 1530-1948*. A sharper corrective could hardly be found to writers whose traffic is famous men and whose reaction to the seamy side is to sprinkle it with literary potpourri. Although written as lightly as the subject allows, it makes grim going. It is a squalid and appalling record, only occasionally relieved by flashes of redeeming humanity, and except in selected doses it is for adults only. But adults should certainly read it.

Even with the best intentions authority has nearly always been beaten by the problem of the illegitimate child. If things were made too easy for his mother his numbers increased, while if she was punished unnecessarily he became the chief sufferer. Starting with the passing of the first Poor Law in 1530, Mrs. Hopkirk shows how the official pendulum has swung between these two insolubles. Elizabeth tried toughness, and so did James the First, and both reaped a bumper crop of infanticide. Charles the Second tied maintenance to the parish of birth, and as a result expectant unmarried mothers were on the road until the last possible moment. Workhouses began to take children about 1700, but though a few were well conducted most were unbelievable. Of seventy-eight babies admitted to the Holborn workhouse in 1765 sixty-four died. When the mother went to prison, which was very likely, the child went too, living with the lowest criminals of both sexes in animal conditions. On the other hand parish clerks, for whom the whole business was a constant headache, soon found that relief in cash put a premium on illegitimacy by making a large family out of wedlock a profitable undertaking. With the eighteenth-century cotton mills of Lancashire, where children of seven were lucky if they worked no

more than seventy-four hours a week, and the early nineteenth-century mines, where girls of six carried coal from the face, we come to child slavery which was still accepted when, as late as 1875, Lord Shaftesbury at last succeeded in banning chimney boys. The English conscience seems to have been troubled by it much less than by slavery in Africa.

In spite of all this muddle and callousness (no worse than in other countries) governments continued to legislate, and there were shining individual exceptions besides Shaftesbury: such men as Jonas Hanway, Thomas Coram, Sir Frederick Eden, Charles Dickens, Thomas Agnew and Dr. Barnardo were typical of the pioneers who fought parliamentary apathy and the ostrich gentility of the public for the sake of the small underdog. Great institutions like the Foundling Hospital gradually came to the rescue, but for a long time too many of them bore titles as crushing as "The Asylum for Poor Friendless Deserted Girls Under Twelve."

Mrs. Hopkirk ends her survey with the Children's Act of 1948, which straightened out a deal of administrative chaos and brought new hope of prevention no less than of relief. Her book is extremely well documented. It deals with such a maze of experiment and frustration that she has been obliged to jump about a good deal over her period. It is not always easy going, but all things considered she has made an impressive job of a difficult subject. The story is not over. Her figures for present-day illegitimacy reflect surprising regional variations and will stagger most readers.

ERIC KROWN



"Are we agreed, sir, that this is a fair reflection of the situation BEFORE we start?"

Urban Craftsmen

Anyone casting about for alternatives to security with-controls might do worse than note the pre-industrial scope of *English Town Crafts*. Few of these were far divorced from rural settings, and many small-town specialities were, as they still are in France, dependent on a background of land-tenure. Mr. Norman Wymer describes a mediæval mason issuing for seasonal work from a remote small-holding: much as an ex-naval engineer to-day augments an agricultural livelihood by domestic electrical work. Several permutations of this principle are suggested by the thirty-odd crafts listed here—though some of them are essentially urban and whole-time. You can hardly build an organ or a billiards-table on an off-day. But you can bind books, make clothes, chase silver, throw pots or weave textiles. "Private enterprise—the whole basis of craftsmanship" has still, the author believes, a future. He hardly justifies his faith, but his happy account and lavish illustrations of old processes and practitioners undoubtedly recommend it.

H. P. E.

Revelations

The revised edition of Miss Winifred Graham's *That Reminds Me*—described by the publishers as the "Romantic Reminiscences of England's most prolific authoress"; it is a fascinating work in the tradition of Mr. C. W. Stamper's "What I Know." My favourite chapter is the one called "Our Taormina Visit and Merry Times at Cannes," but it is difficult to choose

between the items of interest, which include the writer's hereditary connection with the Hampton Fire Brigade, her fight against Mormonism, her account of her family (her grandfather was "the Don of two Cambridge Colleges"). There is a description of Mr. Warwick Deeping, "who demands absolute silence while genius burns and shivers if a dog barks in the garden. It is lucky he has such a sweet, soft-footed wife with a melodious voice," and a tribute to Mr. Walter Hutchinson: "I specially take off my hat to Walter for his ceaseless efforts to keep the literature of this country clean." Social activities and her eighty-five novels also receive mention.

B. G. G. P.

No Place Like Home

All who delight in the sweet, sharp sorrow of remembering childhood spent in the days of security, when summer was a golden day and winter a box of delights, will enjoy *The Blossom on the Bough*, by Dorothy Clewes. Early in the book the heroine, Lydia Meredith, who works in a publishing firm, sees an advertisement of a "Small Elizabethan Manor House," and looks through the printed page into her childhood and smells again "the starched sweetness of a white cotton frock." On an impulse she revisits her old home and, as she goes from room to empty room, we are given the portrait of a family's fortunes and misfortunes. It is easily, simply and unpretentiously done, but the prose is lit from time to time by some rather startling little truth—"A peculiar thought struck me: I was twenty years older than my own father." There is an outer story round the inner kernel of plot, and the author has managed to make all the to-and-fro-ing between childhood and middle-age easy for the reader.

B. E. B.

Books Reviewed Above

Nobody Wanted Sam: The Story of the Unwelcome Child, 1530-1948. Mary Hopkirk. (Murray, 15/-).

English Town Crafts: A Survey of their Development, from Early Times to the Present Day. Norman Wymer. (Batsford, 15/-).

That Reminds Me—. Winifred Graham. (Skeffington, 12/6). *The Blossom on the Bough.* Dorothy Clewes. (Harrap, 9/-).

Other Recommended Books

Everyman's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 1, A-BAL; Vol. 2, BAL-BUL; Vol. 3, BUL-COA; Vol. 4, COA-DRA. (Dent, 12/- each) The third edition of this admirable small encyclopaedia, entirely revised, reset, and reillustrated. About one-fifth is quite new; the Second World War is covered, and "science and engineering are brought up to the Atomic Age." Attractive, handy volumes (eight more to come) of about 750 pages.

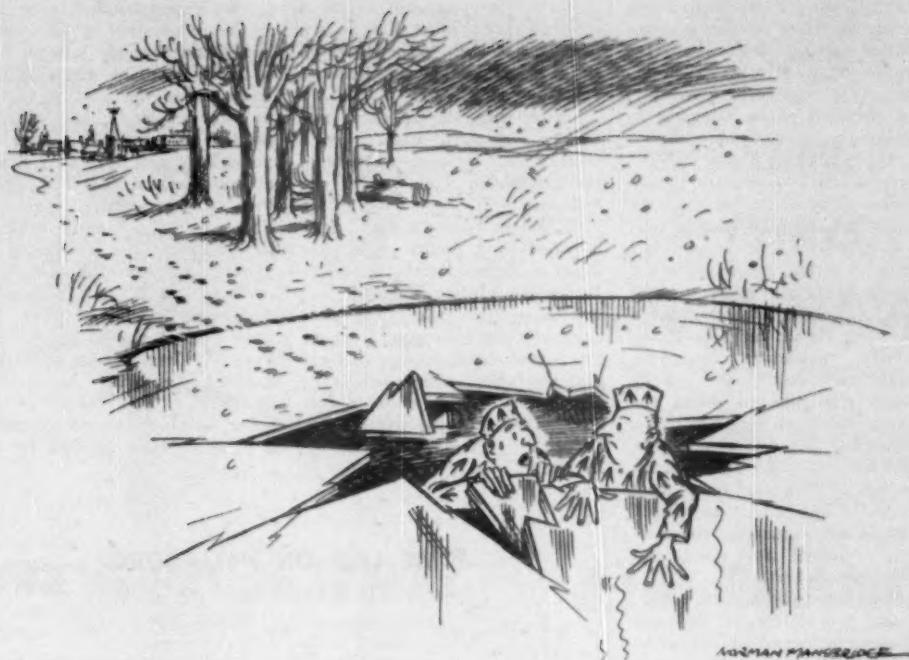
The Young Lions. Irwin Shaw. (Cape, 15/-) First-rate war novel. The conflict in Africa and Europe seen from the German and American sides in a carefully-woven drama. Balanced, dispassionate and engrossing.

Frequent Hearse. Edmund Crispin. (Gollancz, 9/-). Fen in Filmland. Plot more carefully worked out than usual and exuberance of invention more controlled. A good straight detective novel, if not quite as entertaining as some of its predecessors.

Hold Tight There! David Langdon. (Hutchinson, 5/-). A collection of drawings chosen from those that have appeared in the last year or two, mostly in *Punch*.



"Fire!"



"Gone and lost the scent, blast them."

LES ANGLAIS FANTASQUES

A HAPPY chance has brought me a copy of a French conversational guide published in 1847. It was written, as are most of these guides, by a Frenchman—in this case M. Marin de la Voye; and I had not read a dozen sentences before making a remarkable discovery: that despite the shrinking of the Channel passage from three hours to five minutes the French idea of an Englishman in France, as disclosed by these little books, has scarcely altered in a hundred years. Before me lies a second such guide, published during the nineteen-thirties by a Frenchman signing himself "J. R." Almost the only major difference between his traveller and the traveller of 1847 is that the latter, doubtless because he was very much richer, was less truculent concerning over-charges and less ready to summon the police.

The Englishman was, and is,

laconic beyond the point of incivility; he was, and is, quick to resent a rebuff; he was, and is, terrified of railway trains, so much so that he rarely completed, or completes, a journey. "Superintendent! Let me out at the next station!" cries the Englishman of 1847. And we find "J. R.'s" Englishman echoing the cry: "Guard! I must absolutely get out at the next stop!" I find this trait most curious. It was an odd one in 1847, when railways were new; in our own time it is bizarre enough to appear as a slightly sinister complex, difficult to explain away. Many Englishmen are, no doubt, bad travellers. Many more are aggressively insular, deeply convinced that Continental trains, especially ironical, flippant French trains, are not to be relied upon. But neither explanation is sufficient to account for their extraordinary behaviour on French trains—for, as

we learn from "J. R." and M. de la Voye, extraordinary is the only word.

Here is one of M. de la Voye's Englishmen, bound from Le Havre for Rouen. He takes his seat, opens his guide, clears his throat and comes out with remarks like the following:

"Accidents are frightful when they happen on railways."

"An accident that should occur within a tunnel would not fail, it strikes me (*ce me semble*), to be fatal to many people."

"I am constantly dreading the wheels should get out of the rails, or the boiler burst. The rails, in many places, appear to be fixed to their frames with very little care."

"What a frightful crash must that be which is occasioned by two trains meeting at full speed!"

When one considers that these were offered as suitable conversational gambits to passengers who

were probably nervous enough already only one conclusion seems possible: that M. de la Voye hated the English (after all, in 1847 Waterloo was only the day before yesterday) and invented these dialogues to humiliate us before the French.

The odd thing is that "J. R." seems to hate us even more, though he was writing after a war which the two nations had fought side by side. M. de la Voye's Englishman is not without a certain rugged grandeur, when he has his feet on the ground; "J. R.'s" Englishman is without a redeeming virtue; he is pompous, a bully, pessimistic, suspicious, miserly and dull. On railway journeys he goes to pieces the moment the train begins to move. "Do not lean forward too much; you might fall out." "We are much too crowded." "The wind blows from all sides." "The cushions are dirty." "This is not a smoking compartment." "Guard! Have this gentleman removed at once!"

Elsewhere he behaves no better. We find him snarling at an aged boatman who has rowed him out to his ship: "Here is a frane, which is more than you are entitled to. Do not imagine I am to be taken in (*ne croyez pas m'attraper!*)!" And the next moment he is timorously asking a steward: "How deep is the sea in these parts?" At a restaurant he protests: "The bill is too large. I refuse to pay." At a concert, after admitting that he has little ear for music, he says loudly: "The tenor is wanting in expression. The bow of the violinist needs a little rosin (*un peu de colophane*)."
He concludes a visit to a sick friend by

asking: "Do you wish to see a priest?" And the first thing he does in Paris is to write to the Prefect of the Seine requesting permission to visit the city's drains.

Now why should these two writers, separated almost by a century, each present portraits of the English so wounding to our self-esteem?

I believe I have a clue. It is provided by a similar guide published in France for the benefit of Frenchmen visiting England, and written, oddly enough, by a Frenchman, a Monsieur Thomas. Here are two characteristic extracts: "I am giving my wife a sewing-machine for her birthday—Is it to be a surprise?—Yes. She is expecting a motor-car." "You cannot speak to Mr. Smith. He is dead."

It is now crystal clear that in the compilation of these books the French cannot restrain their naturally mordant wit, that their books are not devised seriously but as huge practical jokes, with the purpose (as Jerome K. Jerome suggested long ago) of making fools of all who use them. The final proof is supplied by a sentence in M. de la Voye's preface. "Let the traveller have on the tip of his tongue the words and phrases of this guide," he writes, "and he may reckon on understanding all the polite and other talk of the good people of France." Then, shaking with silent laughter, he offers conversation like this: "The vapour of the boiler, should it expand too freely, is likely to blow up four or five carriages."

6 6

SOME LIVE ON HELLEBORE

SOME live on hellebore, and some on hope,
And some on nectar, which is Heaven's dew;
The first-named wallow, and the second tope,
The last-named sip, but they are very few.

With pitchfork-prod the first are goaded on,
With carrot-bait the second are beguiled;
The third, that view the snows of Helicon,
Attempt them not, and leave them undefiled.

The first endure a world that they despise,
The second spurn a world they would escape,
The third adopt a humorous disguise,
Knowing themselves the same in any shape.

The pity of it is, a man may be
At any moment any of the three.

R. P. LISTER



"I just don't seem to be hungry."

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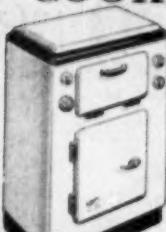


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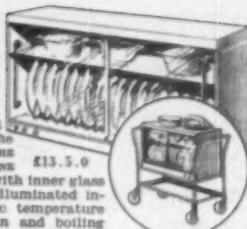


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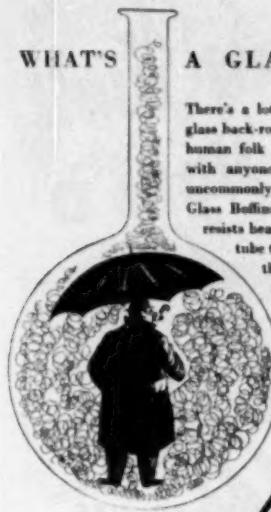
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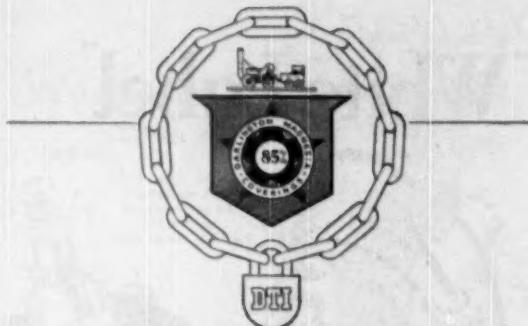
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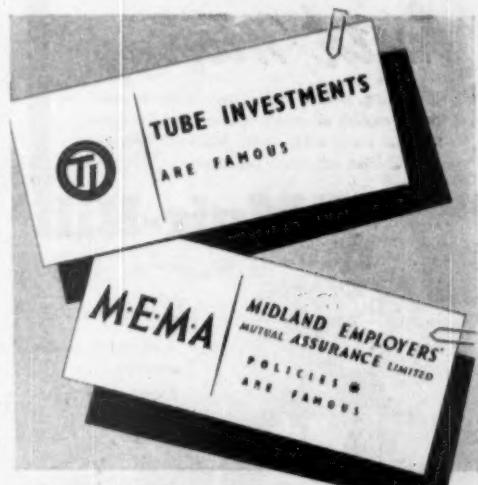


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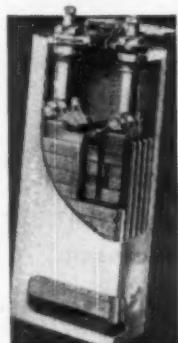
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Why Aluminex? The reasons why the Architect, Eric Ross, F.R.I.B.A., and the Consulting Engineers, Brian Colquhoun & Partners, chose Aluminex for the Brabazon hangar can be seen from this brief comparison :

| REQUIREMENTS | ALUMINEX ADVANTAGES |
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| Maximum light for assembling the Brabazon. | Aluminex is slim, light, offers minimum obstruction to light. |
| Must stand up to Atlantic gales. | Aluminex is strong; has tested gale resistance. |
| No corrosion, visible or hidden. | Non-corroding aluminium alloy, no iron to rust where sown or drilled. |
| Cheap, easy to maintain. | Negligible upkeep costs. No putty to renew, no painting. |
| Assured durability. | Durability proved all over world in last quarter century. |
| Good appearance, clean lines as in Architect's conception. | Any photograph of Aluminex glazing supplies the answer. |

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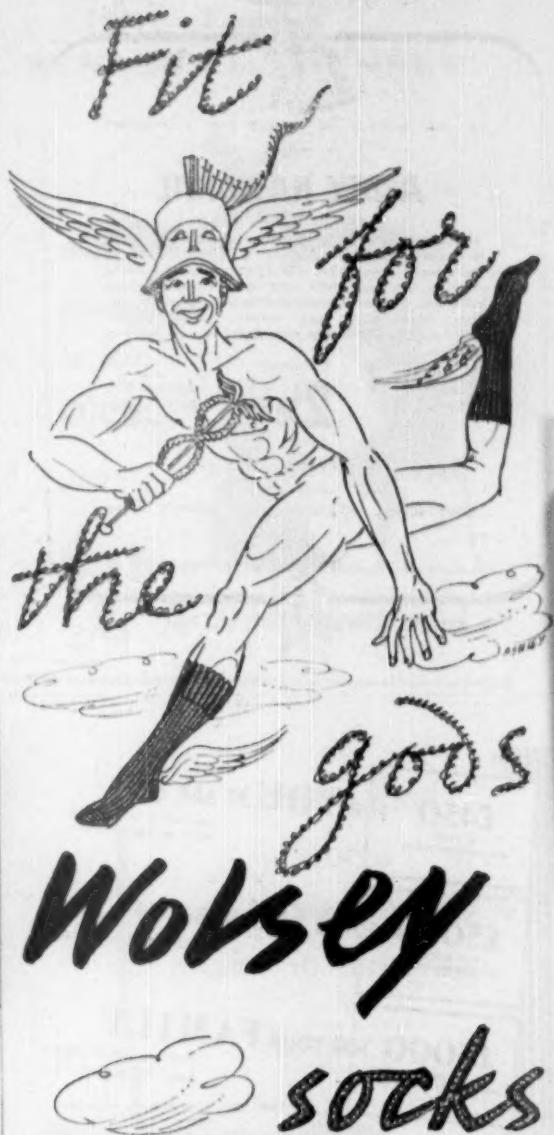
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